

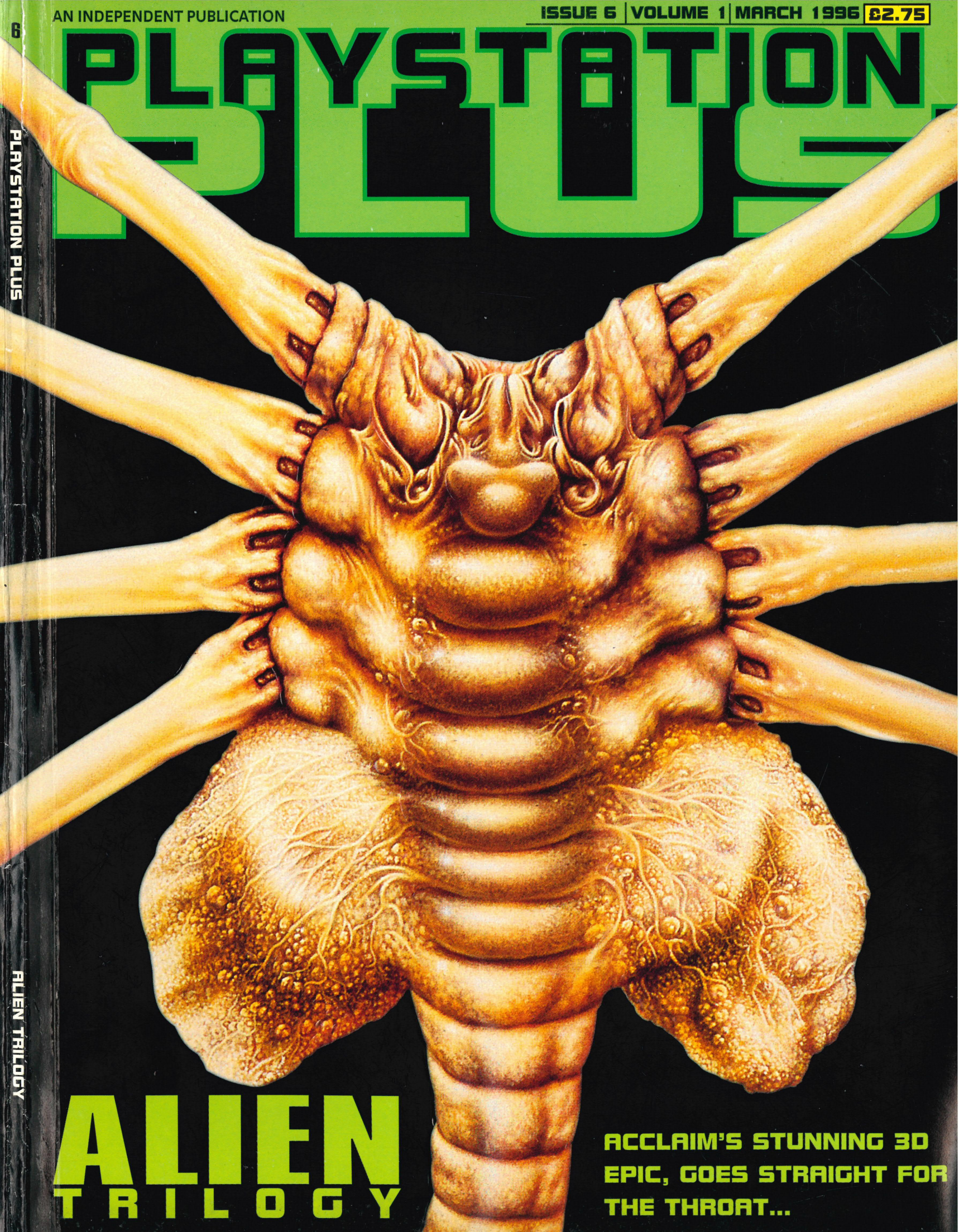
AN INDEPENDENT PUBLICATION

ISSUE 6 | VOLUME 1 | MARCH 1996 | £2.75

PLAYSTATION

PLAYSTATION PLUS

ALIEN TRILOGY



ALIEN TRILOGY

ACCLAIM'S STUNNING 3D
EPIC, GOES STRAIGHT FOR
THE THROAT...

PLAYSTATION PLUS

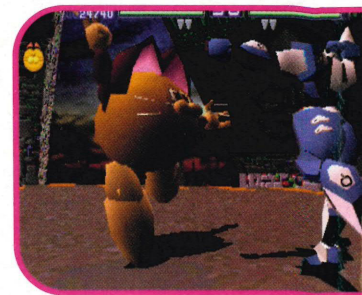
Welcome to this, the sixth issue of PlayStation Plus. To celebrate our half a year in existence, we thought we'd push the boat out and try something a little, well, different with our cover. And the Facehugger was also the perfect way to do Acclaim's brilliant Alien Trilogy justice. So, here's to the next six months, and thanks for your continued support...

The PlayStation Plus team.



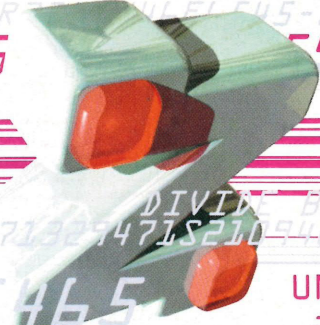
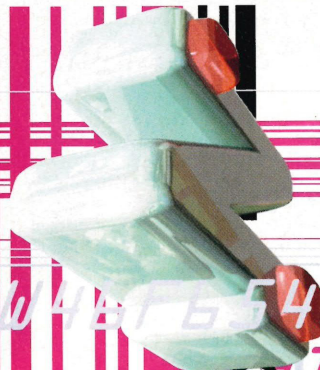
We own your words.

Release yourself from limited combat moves and free-fight through
the virtual freedom of the vast digital XTAL TOWER.



In here is everything you've b
the undiscovered depths that
Expect anything.

SYSTEM CRASH^{XTA}



ocean

zoom

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"You definitely won't
which ought to be rec

ZERO *divide*

DIVIDE-BY-ZERO



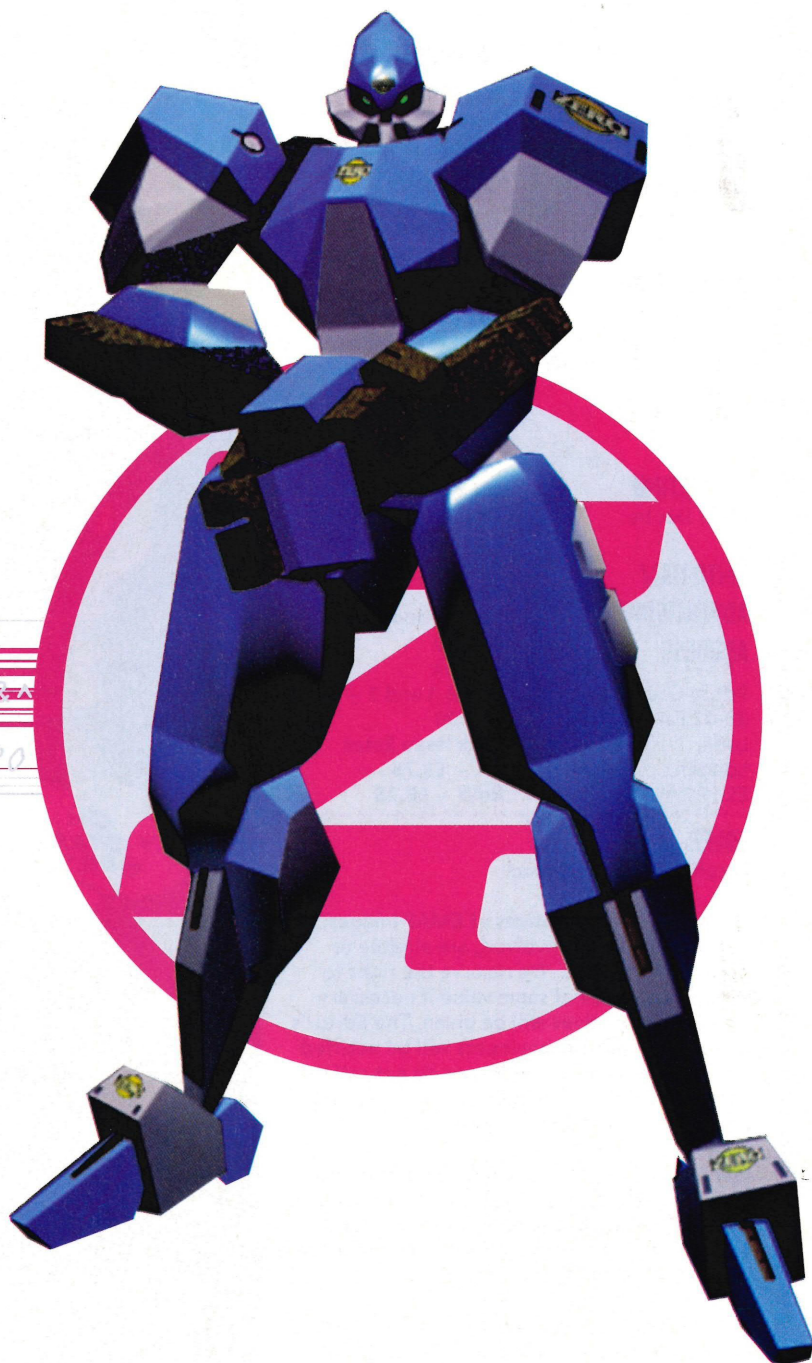
looking for - the moves, the power and
only result from a zero divide.

owns your words



let down if you choose this over Tekken,
commendation enough for anybody...

...better looking, and more hip sounds. Introduces some
cool new ideas through some of the best presentation
around.... Fast, fluid and perfectly in sync... Intelligent,
with great rewards." **C&VG - 91%**



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LE16 9EF
TEL: 01858 468888
Subscription Rates
UK and BFPO —
£33.00
Surface Mail —
£40.00
Airmail
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£46.00
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£73.00
Back Issue Rates
UK — £3.75
RoW — £6.25

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I--
MAGNETO!
HAVE COME
FOR YOU!

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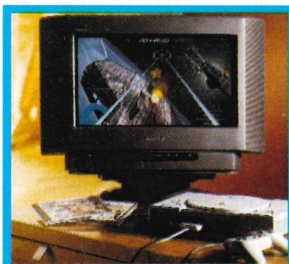
ALIEN TRILOGY

What started off as a very good idea, becomes on of the greatest games to grace the PlayStation. Acclaim's *Doom* clone takes the basics of the id game one step further with inclusion of alien queens, 3D modelled sprites, and everything an *Alien* fan could wish for. Needless to say, we go suitably over-board.



COMPETITION: 14

To celebrate the release of *Loaded*, *Actua Soccer*, and *Actua Golf*, Gremlin Interactive have given us a PlayStation-specific widescreen Television to give away, along with bundles of the three games for five runners-up.



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Ocean's latest programming deities, Neon, have three titles in development for release in the next quarter. Invited to sample the team's forthcoming wares in their Darnstadt offices, *PlayStation Plus* watches with interest.

THE X-FILES: 84

Capcom's dalliances with Marvel's heroic mutants finally reaches the PlayStation in a game that manages to impress even the most die-hard *Street Fighter* fan. *PlayStation Plus* looks at Acclaim's latest acquisition, and roots out essential information regarding Wolverine, Cyclops and co.

PREVIEWS:

With the first part of our extensive look at SIE's superb F1 licence leading the pack, Konami make a surprise appearance as they decide to unleash *Policenauts* on the PAL audience, while EA take on *Ridge Racer* with *The Need for Speed*.

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REVIEWS:

With the likes of *Primal Rage*, *Magic Carpet* and *Adidas Power Soccer* all delayed, the reviews section is a little thinner than usual. Needless to say, *Alien Trilogy* is the leader of the pack, with the likes of *Shellshock*, *NBA in the Zone* and *Gex* desperately trying to keep up.

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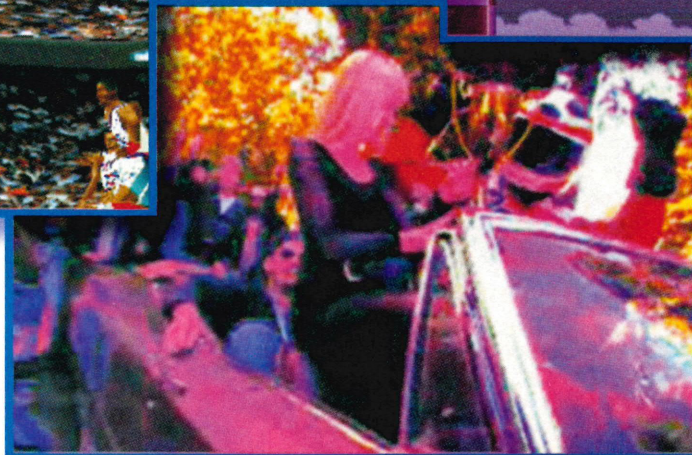
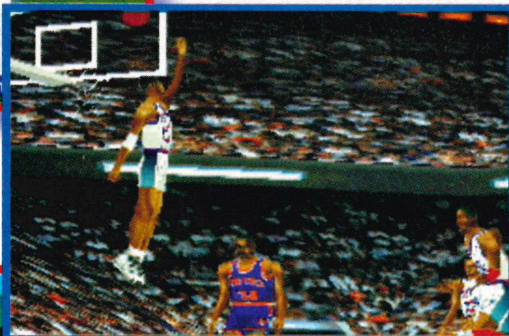
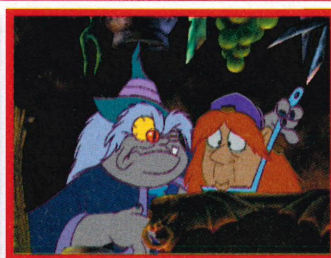
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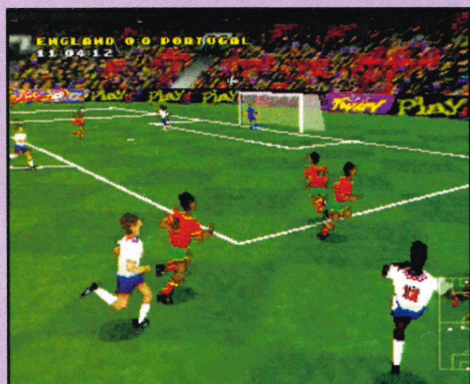
NEWS

MARCH RELEASES

Once again, Sony's home-grown titles appear following fresh delays, and are now joined by a wealth of new third-party releases.

ACTUA SOCCER

The greatest football game to date. Instinctive to play, fast and with no set pattern to goal-scoring. Gremlin look set to hold on to the title — at least until SIE's *Power Soccer* shows its studs. Awarded 92% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 5.



VIEWPOINT

EA update SNK's update of the coin-op classic *Zaxxon*. Sadly, despite stunning graphics, *Viewpoint* is frustrating to play and its difficulty is more a result to extend the six stages than offer a challenge. Playable but only for the strong-hearted. Awarded 83% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 3.



ROAD RASH

A routine conversion of a dated 3DO title. *Road Rash* looks dated when compared to Sony's *ESPN Extreme Games*, and consequently isn't worth the wait. Reviewed on page 68 of this issue.



The first shots of Namco's eagerly-awaited *Tekken II* conversion have been unveiled. Currently 50% complete, the Japanese programming team are reported to be very happy with the conversion's progress, and the final game is said to be very similar to the coin-op indeed. The code on display contains four backdrops — the forest, the cityscape, the village, and an industrial scene — and allows the player to experiment with Paul, Jack-2, Michelle, and Lei. It is not known, however, the status regarding the Heihachi (now fully selectable) and Jun (a new female entrant) sprites.

For anyone unfamiliar with Namco's sequel, it is basically an extension of the original classic, but with more characters and even more moves. The basis of the original game was to mimic real fighting as closely as possible, and to this end the sequel retains the separate punching and kicking buttons, with the special moves accessed via pairing and combinations of these. Expanding upon the possibilities of the first game, *Tekken II* now features moves to counter airborne attacks, and combo moves which allow the user to decimate their opponent with ten consecutive hits. It is in the 'Boss' territory, where *Tekken II* offers the majority of its enhancements, though. As fans of

TEKKEN II :

FIRST PLAYSTATION PICTURES EMERGE!



TEKKEN II VER. B ARTWORK © NAMCO 1994. 1995 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PLAYER SELECT



the first game will know, the first game's mid-bosses (only accessible after fighting all eight 'normal' combatants) were extensions of the basic characters — Power Jack, for example. For the sequel, though, the mid-bosses are all-new and presided over by the newly-created Kazuya Mishima, with a greatly enhanced Devil Kazuya acting as the game's final opponent.

The Japanese version of the game is slated for a March release, so time is still against the programmers to cram the rest of the characters and backdrop in. That said, with the 3D engine panning and scrolling smoother than in the original, it is probably just a matter of dropping the new sprites in, and tightening a few nuts and bolts. *PlayStation Plus* is eagerly awaiting the latest instalment of Namco's fighting classic, and will be bringing you fresh pictures and behind-the-scenes information as and when Namco release it. PAL users will also be pleased to note that, alongside *Ridge Racer Revolution* and *Namco Museum Vol. 1*, *Tekken II* has been signed for a UK release later this year, but it probably won't hit these shores until nearer Christmas. Let's hope the slow-down problems that affected the PAL version of the first game have been eradicated.

RELEASES.... CONTINUED

ASSAULT RIGS

A stalwart of this column, and finally set for release. Playable, but rather too simplistic; slightly better when used by two linked players. Awarded 81% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 3.



TOTAL NBA

We slightly prefer the Konami game, but Sony's home-grown effort is still a very playable dunker. Hugely delayed but definitely set for release in March. Apparently. Awarded 83% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 5.

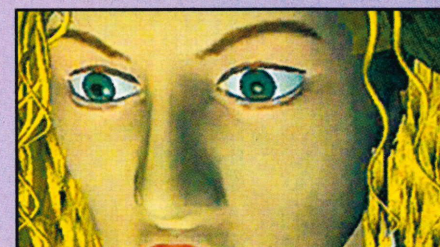


MICKY'S WILD ADVENTURE

Updated conversion of Sony's Megadrive and Super NES hit. An enjoyable, but barely taxing, platform game more suited to the younger player. Awarded 66% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 5.



D Acclaim's weird adventure game is one of the most graphically ground-breaking PlayStation titles we have seen. The house which the heroine explores, under the player's direction, is incredibly atmospheric, but the game loses points for being too short — despite spanning three CDs. Awarded 83% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 5.



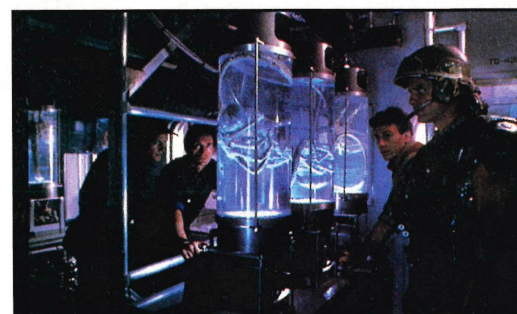
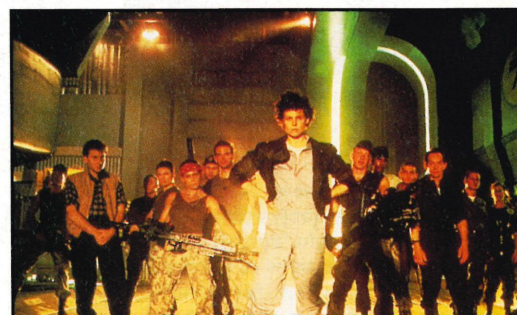
DIE HARD TRILOGY

The next movie trilogy set for Sonydom will be the *Die Hard* series. Produced by Fox's video game division and developed by Probe, the three films are represented by a self contained game for each. The first film has been realised as a polygon-based shoot 'em up along the lines of *Loaded*, with the player controlling the John McClean sprite as he blows up terrorists on his way up the Yakutami Plaza where his wife and the office workers are being held hostage. *Die Hard II: Die Harder* is then unveiled as a *Virtua Cop* clone, with the player guiding a cross hair as a predetermined route through the airport and into bad guy's base is followed. Finally, *Die Hard: With a Vengeance* is a 3D road racer set in the streets of New York with the player guiding a car to phone boxes before they are blown up and decimate the city. The three games are very impressive indeed, with the first game eliminating clipping entirely, and the third recreated from videos of New York's streets and offering screen update to rival that of *Sega Rally* on the Saturn. More next month.



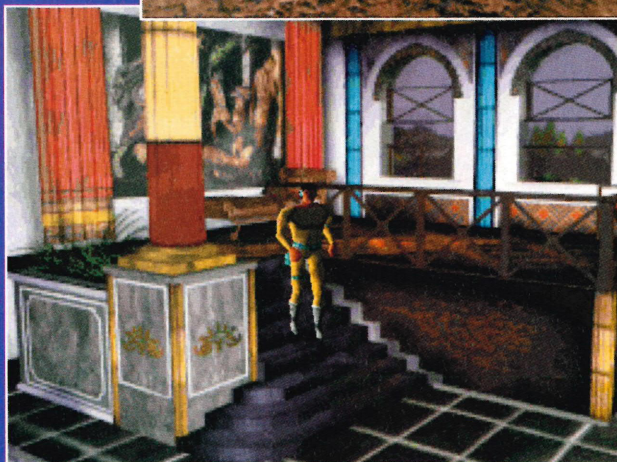
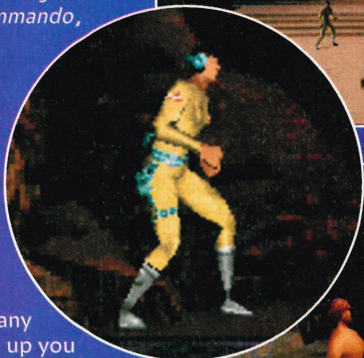
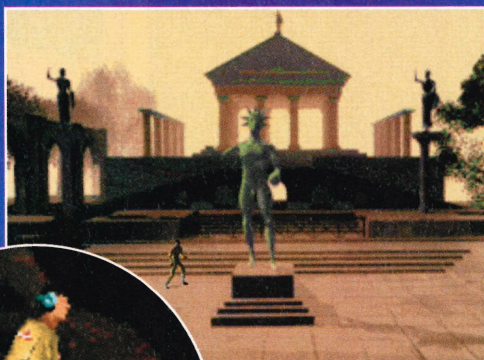
ALIEN TRILOGY II CONFIRMED

During the interview Steve conducted during the production of the *Alien Trilogy* review, the game's director, Cliff B. Falls, confirmed work has begun on the storyboards for a sequel. Without giving too much away, the FMV sequence at the end of *Alien Trilogy* ties up a few plot-related loose ends (such as the second ship which shadows Ripley's mission), and the second game is said to follow on exactly from where the first ends. Obviously, things are at a very early stage, but Cliff did confirm the same 3D engine would be used for the sequel, but other details will follow. Expect *Alien Trilogy II* to appear on Acclaim's release schedule for some time in 1997.



TIME COMMANDO

EA's PlayStation onslaught is set to unleash *Time Commando* on to the Sony machine. Developed by French team, Adeline, *Time Commando* is another attempt at creating movie-style action on the PlayStation. Starring as the titular *Time Commando*, the player is dropped into a series of scrolling zone and left to shoot or fight their way out using whatever comes to hand. The difference between *Time Commando* and any other shoot 'em up you can name, however, is in the presentation. As the player's sprite wanders to and fro, a camera tracks his every move, rotating where necessary and turning corners — all in fluid 3D. For example, there's a scene where the commando lobbs a grenade into a building, and as our hero wanders past it explodes directly behind him, leaving a mere skeleton behind! *Time Commando* looks very nice, and is lined up for a June release.



THE 1996 GOLDEN JOYSTICKS — VOTE NOW!

For over ten years, EMAP Images — the company behind *PlayStation Plus*, and a host of other console and computer mags — has rewarded the video game industry for its excellence. The Golden Joysticks is an annual event where the readers of our magazines are invited to vote for the companies they think deserve praise. 1996 is the first year *PlayStation Plus* will be part of the event, so we cordially invite you to vote for the greatest achievers and games of the year. Using the form provided, just write down which companies you feel warrant particular praise, and we'll do the rest — we've even supplied a number of possibilities, although these are only there for your convenience and in no way reflect the views of the *PlayStation Plus* team. The awards are given on May 8th, and all votes must be in by 19th April and only games released by this time are applicable. Please send a copy of this form into the editorial address, marked GOLDEN JOYSTICKS (*PlayStation Plus*). Ten picked entrants will receive a years subscription to *PlayStation Plus* as an added incentive to vote.

A. BEST CONSOLE ADVERTISEMENT

(Sony S.A.P.S campaign, Time Warner's Primal Rage cinema ads, Ocean's Raiden Project insert)

B. BEST LICENSED 32BIT GAME

(Tekken, FIFA '96, Alien Trilogy, Mortal Kombat III)

C. BEST ORIGINAL 32BIT CONSOLE GAME

(Worms, Doom, Loaded, WipeOut)

D. 32BIT CONSOLE GAME OF THE YEAR

(Doom, Wipeout, Tekken, FIFA '96)

E. BEST CONSOLE DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR

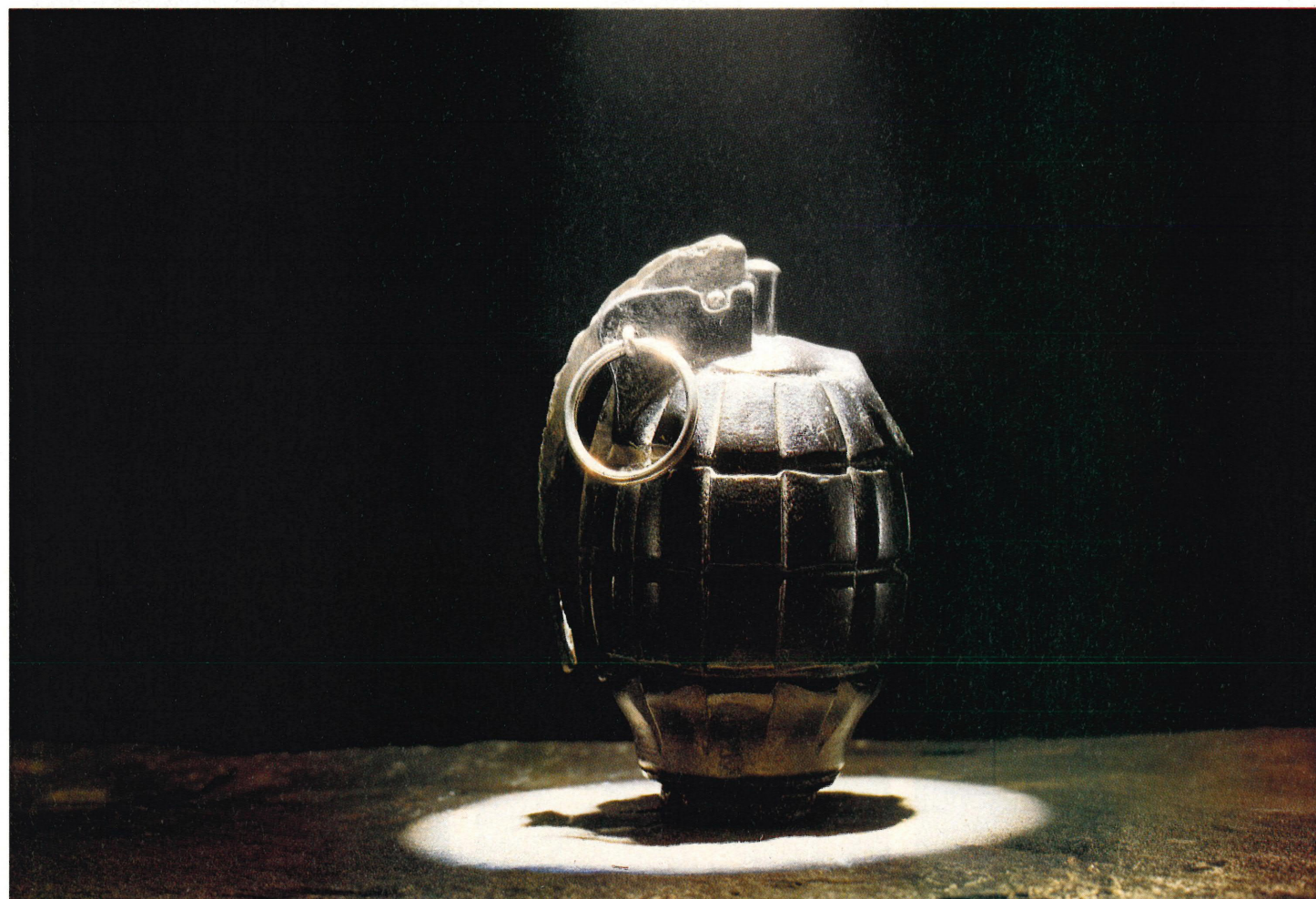
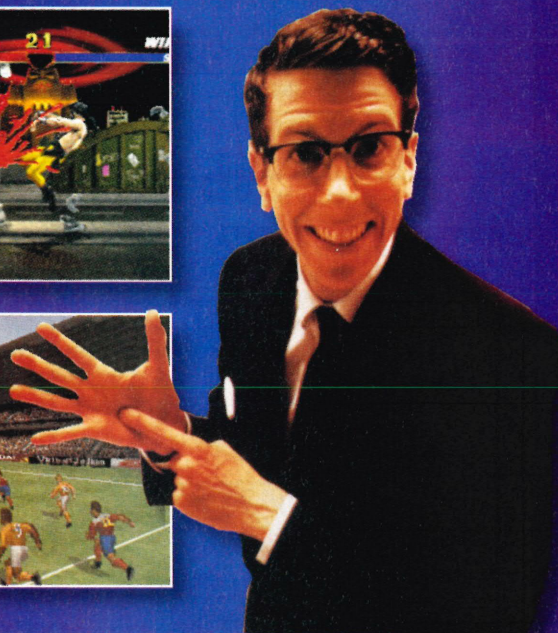
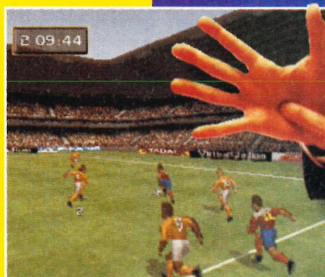
(Probe, SIE, Williams, Namco)

F. BEST TECHNICAL INNOVATION

(SIE — WipeOut, Sony — Total NBA, Acclaim — Alien Trilogy)

G. SOFTWARE HOUSE OF THE YEAR

(SIE, Virgin, Gremlin, Acclaim, Sony)



ACCLAIM SIGN ZEITGEIST

Sadly, Acclaim's deal with Taito also has a downside, and this means that they will be releasing a PAL version of *Zeitgeist* imminently. Long-term readers of *PlayStation Plus* will remember this poor 3D blaster earning a meagre 43% in Issue 2's Import Round-Up, where we criticised its lack of playability and poor 3D routines. The game is being slipped into the shops towards the end of February, but differences between the original NTSC code are minimal so it is best left alone.



IF ANYTHING, THE PAL VERSION OF ZEITGEIST WILL BE EVEN SLOWER THAN THE JAPANESE CODE.

HEXEN: PROBE TO CODE

Word reaches us that GT Interactive's conversion of *Hexen* from the PC is in the hands of the eternally busy Probe. According to GT, despite the project's early state, the 3D engine is up and running and, like Williams' *Doom* conversion, is set to use fancy lighting techniques with the user's on-screen hands and weapons reacting to changes of light. The game is currently set for a June release, and *PlayStation Plus* will be going behind the scenes as soon as there's something to see.



BUBBLE BOBBLE TRILOGY

Continuing their Taito dealings, Acclaim have just added a rival to *Namco Museum* to their PlayStation schedule in the form of a CD containing all three *Bubble Bobble* games. Older games players will recognise the *Bubble Bobble* series as one of the all-time greats, and the CD is set to feature arcade perfect and enhanced versions of the three games. *Bubble Bobble* is a platform game spanning 100 stages, starting two cute Brontosauri — Bub and Bob, the heroes of the trilogy — who move from stage to stage encapsulating foes in the bubbles they spit, before popping them and killing the captured critter. Next comes *Rainbow Islands* wherein Bub and Bob adopt human form, and find themselves armed with rainbows which act as both a deadly weapon and a convenient platform — with the ultimate aim being to reach the top of the scrolling levels. Finally, and the weakest of the trilogy, comes *Parasol Stars* which mixes the single-screen and scrolling levels but arms the pair with umbrellas which scoop up and toss the obligatory baddies to their deaths. The as-yet unnamed CD is being put together by Probe, but a release date has yet to be confirmed.

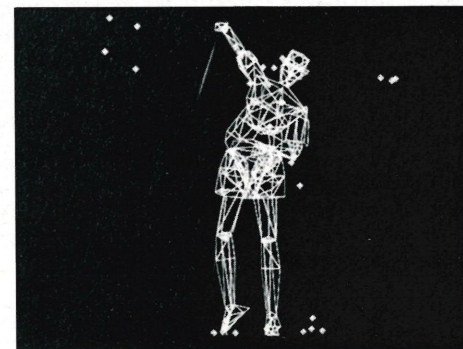
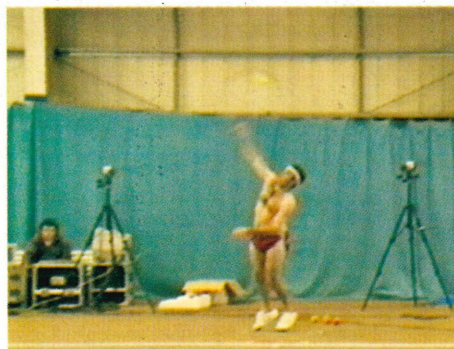
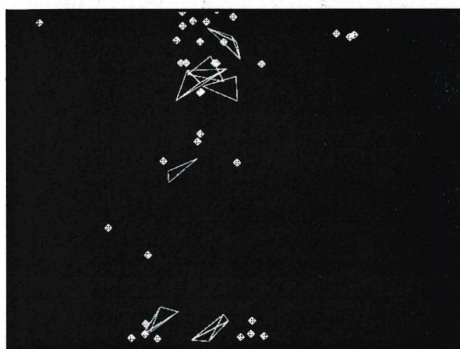


SAMPRAS EXTREME WARMS UP

Here are the first pictures to emerge from Codemaster's *Pete Sampras Extreme*. A mere three months into the game's development, the programmers have put together the basic courts and re-

cently went into a studio to motion-capture real players. As you can see from the pictures, the Codies then create a skeleton from a series of wired points, and these are fleshed out to create the final player sprites. With

the exception of Pete himself, the players in the final code will be fictitious, but we are promised all the backhand, smashes, and lobs of the real sport in what could be the best Tennis game for the PlayStation to date.



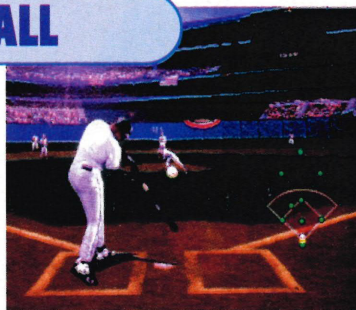
LUCASARTS LINK TO PLAYSTATION

Leadng PC developer, LucasArts, are bringing their talents over to the PlayStation. Following initial rumours that they were planning to bring *Rebel Assault II* (a *Star Wars*-inspired game for the PC) to the Sony machine, they have broken their silence by disputing this story but confirming they are updating their old C64 oddity — *Ballblazer* — for a late 1996 release. Released way back in 1983 for the Commodore 64, *Ballblazer* is a future sport, wherein the player is seated in what appears to be a large armchair dropped on to a chequered board. Basically, the player guides their 'chair' around the scrolling area in search of a ball which is then fired into an ever-shrinking goal. Strange as it may seem, the C64 version is regarded as a true classic, and we await the PlayStation version with baited breath. Virgin are the likely candidates to release the game in the United Kingdom, but this has yet to be confirmed.



BIG HURT BASEBALL

Acclaim have just released the first PlayStation shots of *Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball*. Looking considerably smoother than its 16bit cousins, Acclaim's motion-capture technology has been used for all the batter and pitcher anims, and the fielders also benefit from smoother movement. The game is scheduled for a June release, so a review is no doubt imminent.



ATARI AND SNK SIGN TO PLAYSTATION

Sony have secured something of a coup as SNK and Atari have signed up to develop games for the PlayStation. With both firms owning consoles themselves (the Neo-Geo and Jaguar respectively), it seems as if they are effectively bowing out to the Sony machine, in turn bringing their most renowned titles with them. SNK's first title is likely to be a conversion of their popular *Street Fighter* clone, *King of the Fighters '95*, which boasts huge sprites and bizarre moves, and is likely to be followed by updates of old SNK faves, *Samurai Shodown* and *Fatal Fury*. Atari, on the other hand, have less credible titles to hand, and the titles most likely to make it to the PlayStation are *Tempest 2000* and *Defender 2000* — although *Alien vs Predator* has also been mooted.



PLAYSTATION PLUS

RECOMMENDS

The best of the last few months...

DOOM

Still the *PlayStation Plus* office favourite. While the basic levels are starting to wear a little thin, we have now located the elusive *Club Doom* (more on this next issue). The link-up mode is the best use of the peripheral yet, drawing in huge crowds to proffer advice and offering essential after-pub activity.

WORMS

The appeal still hasn't waned — as long as there are a number of mates to hand to join in the action. *Worms* is the greatest game of skill the Sony machine has played host to, and its randomly-generated levels never fail to leave somebody moaning about how unfair it can be.

RIDGE RACER REVOLUTION

Namco's sequel offers more tracks, more cars and all the playability of the original. The main benefit, however, is the addition of the link-up mode which adds a new layer of challenge to the game, and allows much cutting up on corners and marvelling at how brilliant Sony's cable really is.





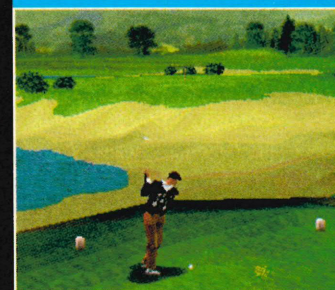
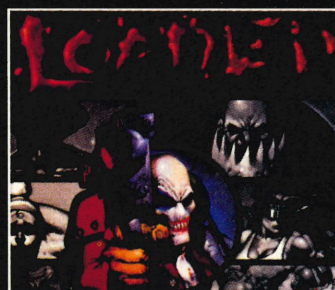
WIN! A SMART SONY WIDESCREEN TV!

COURTESY OF GREMLIN INTERACTIVE

PLUS! COPIES OF *LOADED*, *ACTUA SOCCER* AND *ACTUA GOLF* FOR RUNNERS-UP

To celebrate the release of Gremlin's trio of PlayStation titles — *Loaded*, *Actua Soccer*, and *Actua Golf* — the Sheffield-based softco has given us a rather smart Sony Widescreen Television to give away to a rather fortunate reader. The television has been specifically designed for use with the PlayStation, and the extended screen is perfect for eliminating those annoying borders PAL users abhor. And to make sure you've got something new to play on such a prize, Gremlin are also offering the winner copies of the said games, while five runners-up will receive copies of the games.

To stand a chance of winning the television, listed on the right are three questions relating to Gremlin games, and all you have to do is jot down the correct answers on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope and send it in to the usual address, marked: GREMLIN WIDESCREEN TV COMPO. Usual competition rules apply, and are printed in the masthead on the contents page if required.



THE QUESTIONS

- Which of the following is not a *Loaded* character?
A. Vox
B. Mamma
C. Pops
- What prefix is given to all Gremlin's sports games?
A. Actua
B. Virtua
C. Real
- Which international/Actua side does Dennis Bergkamp play for?

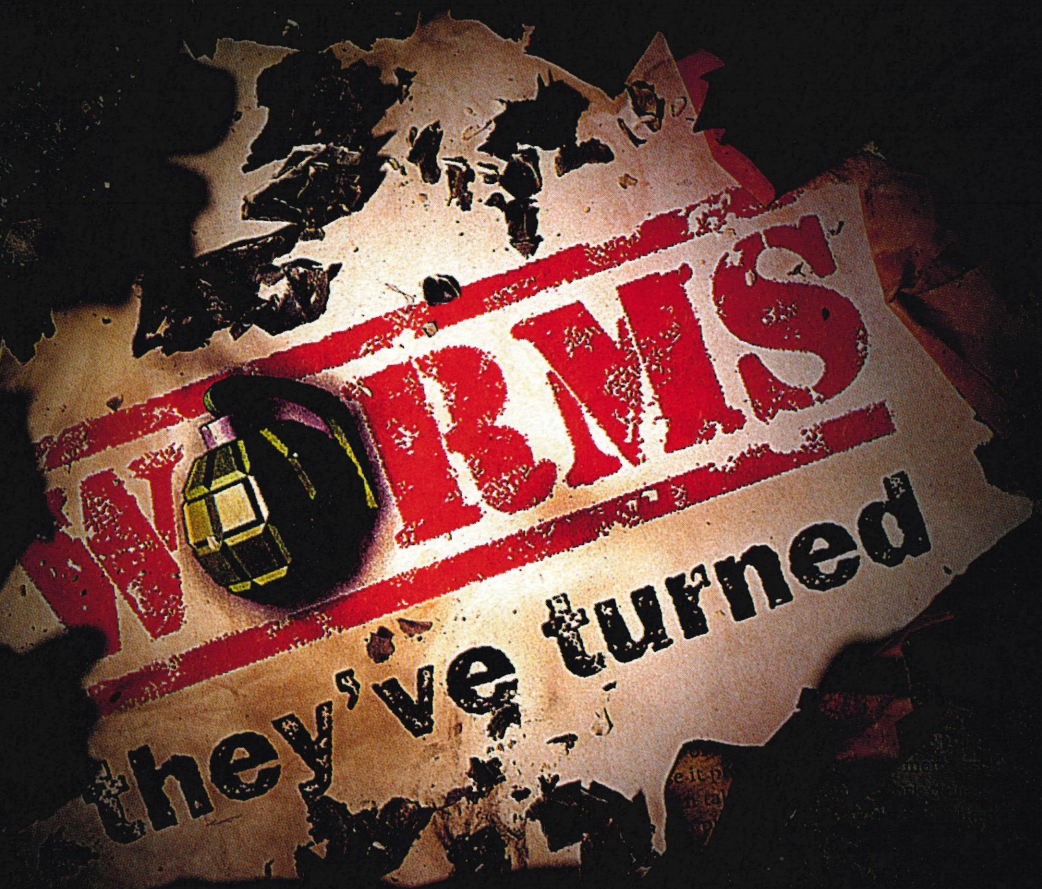
- A. Sweden
B. Holland
C. Norway

Please ensure entries are received by 23rd March. Multiple entries will be ignored.

ocean

PC, PC CD-ROM, MAC, AMIGA, MEGA DRIVE, SNES,
PLAYSTATION, SATURN, CD32, JAGUAR, GAMEBOY

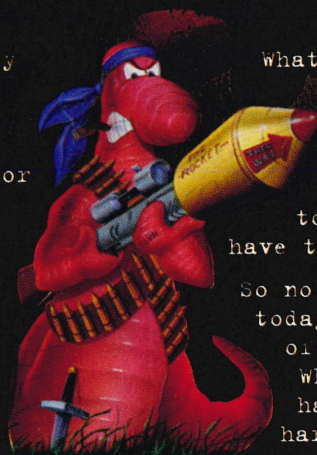
TEAM 17



Ever felt like mercilessly blowing away your bank manager, tax collector, teacher, brother, sister, best friend, worst enemy or Jeremy Beadle?

Now you can, with Worms, the game of the year from Team 17 and Ocean.

It's totally pointless violence and totally addictive gameplay. Perfect.



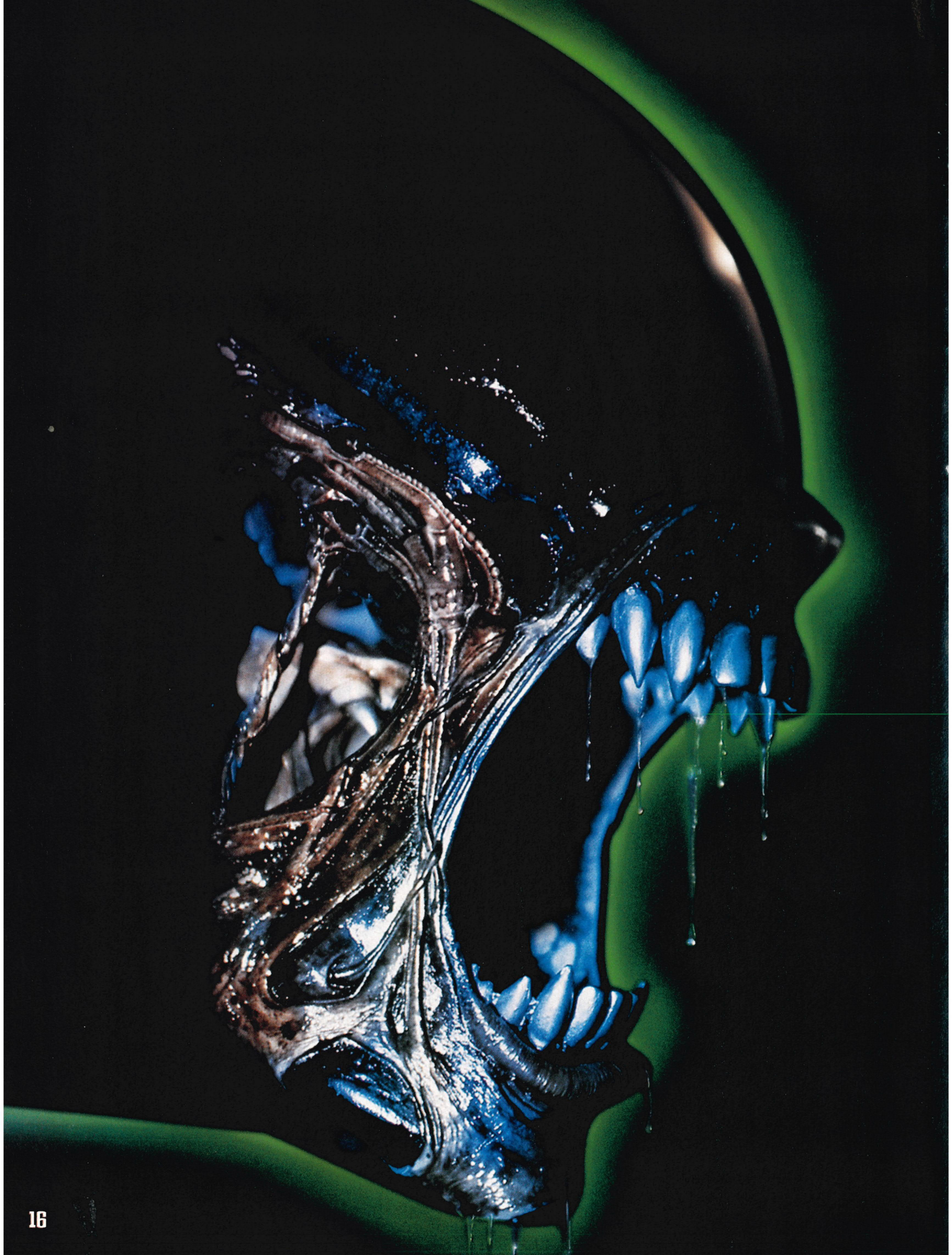
What's it all about?

Well, rather like the morning after a really hot curry, the feeling is impossible to explain. You simply have to experience it.

So no matter what else you do today, get hold of a copy of Worms and blast away. Who knows, maybe you'll have the World's hardest worm.

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WORMS PLAYABLE PC DEMO - <http://www.team17.com/>



ALIEN

TRILLOGY

'This is Flight Lieutenant Ellen Ripley of the Nostromo signing off!'

One of the life's greatest traumas is having a distant relative tell you how you've changed at obligatory family gatherings. However, for the first time in my life I feel compelled to do the same thing. I'm sitting in a darkened conference room with *Alien Trilogy's* Producer and Acclaim's PR bloke looking at the said *Doom* clone and, as sampled squeals and the retort of pulse rifle fire echo around the room, I'm impressed. All the seemingly impossible promises made about *Alien Trilogy* during our exclusive preview in Issue Two have been realised, and as the Producer proudly leads us through the labyrinthian Acheron complex, true to Acclaim's words, and to quote Hudson from the second film, the aliens are literally coming out of the goddamned walls. *Alien Trilogy* has come a long way since our preview in the second issue, and, (partially) coining a phrase from aunties everywhere 'I didn't recognise it from the last time I saw it...'

Now, we're among some of *Doom's* greatest fans but — in the same 'wouldn't it?' world where one day food will come in pill form — wouldn't it be great if someone crossed *Doom* with the *Alien* films? The possibilities would be incredible, with the player blasting away at oncoming aliens, avoiding gouts of acid blood, and shooting Facehuggers as they leap at their on-screen face. It's such a cool idea, it has always struck us as amazing that nobody jumped on the bandwagon. Over two years ago, however, the very same idea was sketched out on paper at Probe's Croydon offices, and touted to Acclaim as a possible Mega-CD title. After initial work, though, the Sega medium was deemed too slow to handle what Probe had planned, so the project was temporarily shelved. It has now fallen to the PlayStation to realise the adventure, which has the potential to become the greatest game to grace the Acclaim label to date. In space they may not be able to hear you scream, but the anguished yells of disappointed Sony users is going to be considerably harder to ignore if *Alien Trilogy* emerges as anything less than brilliant...



BLASTING BARRELS REVEALS
PREVIOUSLY HIDDEN
FACEHUGGERS AND BONUSES.

THE FULLY-GROWN 'DOG ALIEN'
MAKES IT DEBUT TOWARDS THE
END OF THE 'FURY' SECTION.

THE CRYOGENIC CHAMBER IS
DESERTED APART FROM ONE
SMALL 'BAMBI' ALIEN.





ALIEN TRILOGY™

GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: AVE
CONTINUES: PASSWORD
SKILL LEVELS: THREE

RELEASE APRIL

PRICE £44.95

BY ACCLAIM

PLAYERS 1



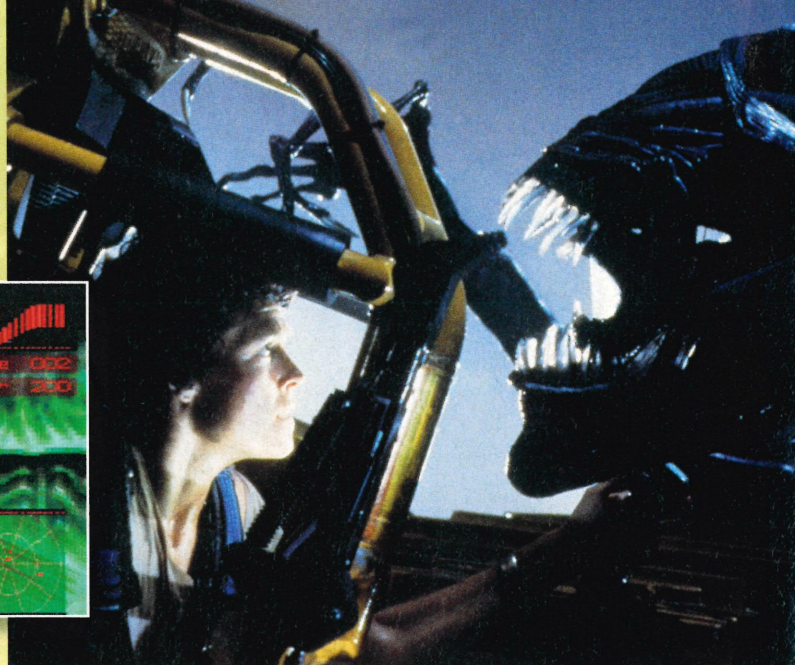
In the darkness of space lurks a horror beyond belief. Best described as a fusion of speed and teeth, HR Giger's alien creation still ranks as one of the big screen's greatest creations. Everything about the alien is geared to survival. It incubates in a host body taking the fluids needed to grow, before bursting out of the victim's chest killing it instantly. From here, the alien follows a life pattern similar to that of an insect. They instinctively turn their locale into a hive, using bodily secretions to create walls which double up as cocoons for further incubation, and living at the centre of the hive is an egg-laying Queen who towers above her minions and is attached to an egg sac pumping out Facehugger eggs to propagate the species. In short, the alien is the deadliest parasite imaginable. It can survive in any environment, and is incredibly hard to kill.

This perfect creation has been the centrepiece of two very good films (*Alien*, *Aliens*), and one second-rate piece of shite (*Alien 3*), and is set to return in the mooted *Alien Resurrection*. Of course, as with most major movies, attempts at bringing the

alien menace to the home machines have been plentiful. From the distant days of the ZX Spectrum and Argus Press' *Alien* strategy game, through to Activision's credible *Aliens* for the C64 and Acclaim's *Alien 3* for the Super NES, there has been a pretty constant supply of *Alien*-related games for the home. But none have captured the atmospheric feel of the films. None have offered the user the fear that facing such a formidable creature would generate. Now, however, Acclaim are pitting the player against the alien in a game based on all three of the films — with the user dropped into a *Doom*-like scenario armed with familiar weapons from the films and set in recognisable settings. The bitch is indeed back, is impregnating your PlayStation, and exceeds all expectations. This time it's war...



BEFORE THE QUEEN IS ENCOUNTERED, THE EGG CHAMBER AWAITS.



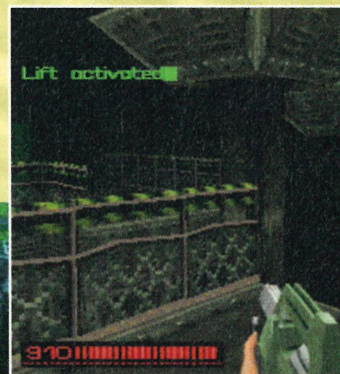
ENTER THE THIRD DIMENSION

While *Alien Trilogy* owes more to *Doom* than Fergie does to her bank, credit goes to Acclaim's team for furthering the genre. 'Everything in *Alien Trilogy* is displayed in true 3D,' Cliff B. Falls, the Associate Producer, offers. 'In *Doom* if you walk past a bad guy they flip over as they only exist in a 2D plane. In *Alien Trilogy*, if you walk around an alien, it exists as a 3D model — so you'll see its side, its ass, everything.' The same is also true of the play area. 'You'll find narrow passages alongside

crates,' he elaborates, 'and in any other game you'd never be able to walk past them as the game logic wouldn't allow it. Yet in *Alien Trilogy* you can see any area from any angle.' The main benefit of this — aside from looking good — is that the player can hide behind a wall of objects and pick off oncoming aliens or guards using the duck and shoot buttons.



THE REALISM EXTENDS TO BLOWING OUT THE WINDOWS.



EVOLUTION OF THE SPECIES

Giger devised a reproductive system which allowed the alien to survive in any environment. Each film has expanded upon his ideas, with the alien spawn inevitably surviving for another sequel...

COMPANY GUARDS EXPLODE IN A SHOWER OF BLOOD, WHILE SYNTHETICS ARE MORE RESILIENT.



FACEHUGGER TRAP

As Kane (John Hurt) discovers to his cost, the egg acts as a trap and as he pores over it, the top opens revealing a veiny lump inside. In a moment of motion picture history, a crab-like creature attaches itself to his face.



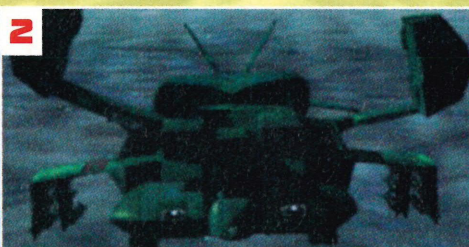
THE NIGHTMARE BEGINS

One of the greatest mysteries surrounding the initial *Alien Trilogy* designs was how Probe were going to cram aspects of the three films into a game – after all, the first and third films could only boast one creature as they preferred to rely on suspense for their thrills. Using a little artistic licence, the developers opted to recount the events of the three films as closely as possible, but not in the same order. As such, the player – stepping into the khaki duds of Ellen Ripley – begins the game exploring LV426 in search of the stricken colonists (and mimicking the events of the second film), before jetting off to the prison planet, Fiorina where the third film's dog alien has been joined by thousands of its cousins. And the game is rounded off when it returns to events based – very loosely – on the first film. 'You always need to take a certain amount of artistic licence with games

based on films,' reasons Cliff, 'so to make the *Alien* part of the game more exciting, we're dropping the player into the 'Bone Ship' where the eggs were first found. It sort of rounds things off nicely, as the level begins with an intro sequence of Ripley entering the ship muttering about how it's "time to end things once and for all", and the final battle takes place with the huge 'Space Jockey' (the alien Kane, Lambert and Dallas find before discovering the eggs). In addition to the expected blasting, the plot also has a twist with a secondary ship following Ripley's one, with company types out to round up alien specimens for biological-warfare experimentation...



1 RECREATING THE EVENTS OF THE SECOND FILM, THE DROP SHIP ENTERS ACHERON'S ATMOSPHERE.



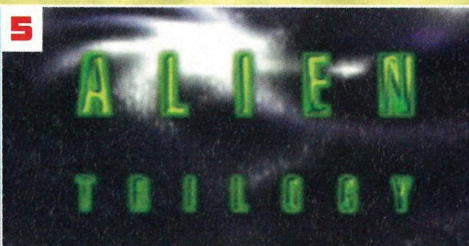
2 AS WINDS BUFFET ITS STEEL-CLAD BODY, THE TUBES ARE UNLEASHED TO EASE THE LANDING.



3 WITH LIGHTS BARELY PENETRATING THE FOGGY SURFACE, THE DROPSHIP STRUGGLES TO DESCEND.



4 NO SOONER HAS THE SHIP HIT THE GROUND THEN THE APC CONTAINING THE MARINES ROLLS OUT.



5 AS THE MARINES HEAD TOWARDS THE STRICKEN COLONISTS, THE GAME LOGO FADES INTO VIEW.



6 THE BASE SEEMS DESERTED WITH ONLY A HANDFUL OF LIGHTS ON, AND NO SIGN OF LIFE.



7 BISHOP OVERSEES THE PARTY AS A BYPASS OPENS THE DOOR TO THE BASE.



8 THE MARINES SCOUR THE GANGWAY AS THEIR MOTION TRACKERS INDICATE MOVEMENT.



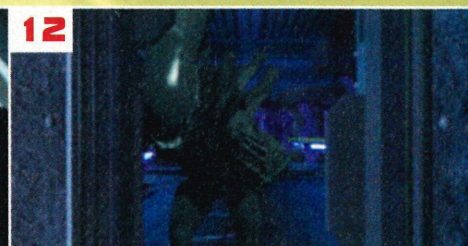
9 LOOKING UP, THE UNFORTUNATE MARINE IS DRAGGED KICKING BY A PAIR OF ALIEN HANDS.



10 STUNG INTO ACTION, THE MARINES TRY TO KILL THE ALIEN, FIRING IN ITS WAKE.



11 BISHOP CAN ONLY WATCH AS THE MARINES ARE TORN APART, AND RIPLEY RESOLVES TO GO IN.

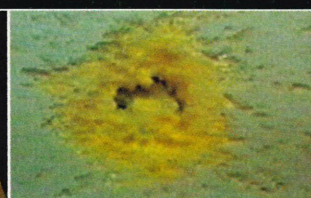


12 THE APC IS BREACHED AS AN ALIEN ATTACKS. RIPLEY BLOWS ITS HEAD OFF AND STEPS INTO THE FRAY.

ACID BLOOD

ALIEN

The Nostromo's medical computer indicates that, despite the attached parasite, Kane is in near perfect health. Ash (Ian Holm) cuts into one of its legs and yellow blood spurts from the wound, rapidly burning through the floor.



ALIEN TRILOGY™

THE COMPANY YOU KEEP

As if contending with hordes of alien warriors wasn't enough, the evil machinations of Welland-Yutani (the 'Company' Ripley works for) have dispatched a series of guards to protect their alien subjects. As such, as Ripley picks her way through the colony and prison complexes, the guards are dogging her every move. 'We've put two types of guard in,' Cliff explains. 'One is human and the other, synthetic. The main difference is that the humans are easier to kill, while the synthetics stand up to more firepower and spurt white blood when they eventually fall.'

Similarly, towards the end of the Fiorina segment, the base is invaded by the Samurai guards – like the ones which attempted to pull Ripley from the edge of the smelting plant at the end of the third film.



**THE FULLY MATURED DOG ALIENS
ATTACK IN PACKS OF THREE OR FOUR,
AND ARE EXTREMELY HARD TO KILL.**



**TRUE TO THE FILM, SMART GUNS ARE
BEST FIRED IN SHORT BURSTS. ITS
GRENADES ARE BEST SAVED FOR THE
QUEEN'S LAIR.**

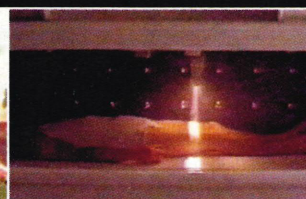
ILLEGAL ALIENS

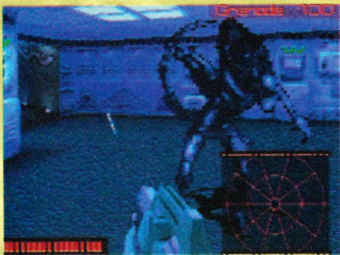
Throughout the three films, the alien's design has been redesigned slightly, with Giger's design given a ridged head for the second film, and a dog-like stance for *Alien 3*. Giger's original intention was that the alien's DNA would become spliced with that of its victim on impregnation, and this theme continued in early drafts of the third film and made it into *Alien 3* as Giger's vision of the 'dog alien.' The game continues this trend, with the assorted corridors playing host to Facehuggers, alien warriors, eggs, and the 'dog' alien. 'We've got some really cool stuff

in there,' Cliff grins, 'for instance during the Acheron level, the player has been sent to collect the tags colonists wear. When you find the colonists, they've been cocooned into the walls by the aliens ready to generate new ranks. So when you go up to them real close you'll hear a sample of 'please kill me' taken from *Aliens* and a Chestbuster breaks out! It will then run off and turn into a Facehugger, like in the films.' Despite the latter part of Cliff's claim – after all, Chestbusters grow into warrior aliens – *Alien Trilogy* is as full of alien creatures as promised. And,

INCUBATING CHESTBURSTER ALIEN

A scan indicates that something has lodged itself in Kane's chest. Soon he wakes up, seemingly unharmed. During a meal, however, he convulses and a creature bursts from his chest and scuttles into the shadows.

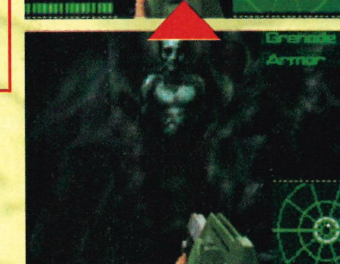




AN EXAMPLE OF PROBE'S EFFECTIVE LIGHT-SHADING.



THE PRISON PLANET PLAYS HOST TO THE TOUGHEST STRAIN OF ALIEN — THE MATURED 'DOG' CREATURE.



courtesy of a specially-created piece of software, the individual creatures differ in their abilities, with some considerably more intelligent than others. Similarly, not all the aliens are as powerful as warriors, and Probe have added the 'Bambi' alien (so named because of its unsteady legs) of the third film who comes along and nips Ripley occasionally before running away.



THE BAMBI ALIEN IS UNSTEADY ON ITS FEET AND BASICALLY SERVES AS CANNON FODDER.



OBJECTS OF DESIRE

Ripley's task is made easier by other objects. As with the weapons, these are selected via Ripley's inventory screen or the R buttons.

PROTECTIVE VEST

Dampens the damage inflicted by the Company guards' guns. Has little effect against alien slashes, though.



AUTO MAPPER

Resembling a laptop computer, this device charts and records the areas Ripley has visited, storing them for later use.



BATTERY PACK

Used to activate switches and doors. Strangely, these Earth-made batteries also power up the bio-mechanical doors in the third section's 'Bone Ship.'



BOOTS

Acid is only harmful when an alien lies dead on the floor and so this Marine Issue sturdy footwear will protect Ripley's feet.



ENERGY

Comes in two forms, either as a collectable pod or as floor tiles. Both raise Ripley's energy by ten points.



ADRENALINE SHOT

A more powerful variant of the energy pods. Adrenaline shots are extremely thin on the ground, though.



ID CARD

Collection of these forms several of the missions, and they can be found by searching the dead bodies of guards and colonists or by blowing open lockers.



MEDIKIT

Replenishes lost energy. One of the more common powers, and can be used at Ripley's discretion.



NIGHT VISION GOGGLES

The alien secretions on Acheron and in the 'Bone Ship' reduce visibility and thus render the alien virtually invisible. These reduce the effect.



SHOULDER LIGHT

This illuminates the dark areas far more effectively than the goggles.



RAPID GROWTH ALIEN

The search for the chestbuster has been going for mere hours, when Brett (Harry Dean Stanton) finds a slimy mess on the floor. Lifting it up, it is apparent the creature has shed its skin — and has grown to over six feet tall.



ALIEN TRILOGY™

TERMINAL CASE

As big a cliché as it is, *Alien Trilogy* also professes a slight puzzle element. 'Basically, a bit of lateral thinking is needed to get some of the doors working and to solve some of the missions,' Cliff offers. 'As the level loads, the mission briefing is given, and this could be anything from kill everything to turn on the lights. However, doing this may require a battery to power up the relevant switch so then you've got to hunt down the battery and find the device which powers the door you need.' Some of the puzzles aren't quite so obvious, though, and on entering a room your motion detector could be going wild, indicating multiple targets, but there's nothing in the corridor ahead. Pumping a grenade into the wall removes some of the alien mucus, though, and may also partially reveal another exit — with the aliens milling around inside. Probe also promise a number of hidden levels in addition to the basic 33, but these are yet to be placed within the game and can only be found by wiping out 99% of the creatures in a level.

DOOR SWITCHES VARY IN DESIGN YET, FOR SOME REASON, USE THE SAME BATTERIES.



Alien Trilogy is the first 'Next Generation' game from Acclaim to utilise their much-touted motion-capture technology. Based in their Manhattan office, close liaison between Probe's programming team and the New York capture team is needed, with Cliff and Probe's Jo Bonar overseeing the relations. When coding the game, Probe make notes of what animation they'll need and a list sent to the motion-capture studio. From here, an actor is employed and has his entire body wired up to a series of SGI workstations. 'In past motion-capture games,' says Cliff, 'the sensors have only been placed on moving parts of the body — elbows, knees, etc. With *Alien Trilogy* we wired up every part so that the on screen animation will be closer to the way muscular movement works.' The actor then goes through the motions of crawling, attacking, and whatever else is needed, and the completed

skeleton is sent back to Probe in Croydon. 'From here, the artist can then add a 'skin' to the skeleton — including the alien tail or company garb — and the sprite is ready for inclusion in the game. The other benefit being that it is a true 3D representation and, as such can be viewed from all angles,' he adds.

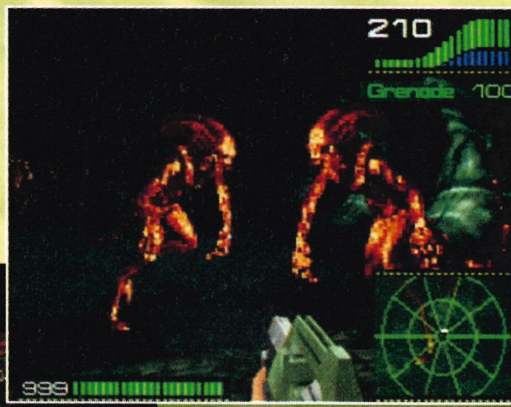
Dropping the aliens and guards into the game also uses a specially-created system, with a team of 15 graphic artists piecing together a map editor which gives an overview of each labyrinthian stage.

'Each alien is represented by a coloured dot, and these are placed at key points on the sketch map,' explains Cliff. 'We can then highlight one of the dots and add a series of attributes to that certain alien — better hearing, agility, or strength, for example. Creating this map editor took a year and a half alone, but it makes for a more varied game.'



THE ALIEN SPRITES ARE 3D MODELS WHICH CAN BE VIEWED FROM ALL ANGLES. WALKING BEHIND ONE, FOR EXAMPLE, MEANS YOU WILL BE IN LASHING DISTANCE OF ITS TAIL.

WHEN AN ALIEN IS DESTROYED IT IS REDUCED TO A POOL OF ACID BLOOD. TREADING IN THIS REDUCED RIPLEY'S ENERGY IMMEDIATELY.



THE 'BONE SHIP' IS POPULATED BY EVERY BREED OF ALIEN, INDICATING THAT THE DEAD CREATURE WITHIN THE JOCKEY CHAMBER WAS TRANSPORTING THEM SOMEWHERE.

FACEHUGGERS ARE INCREDIBLY FAST AND SCUTTLE AWAY FROM IMMEDIATE DANGER. THEY ALSO HIDE IN NICHES IN THE WALLS.

ALIEN INCUBATION ALIENS

Searching for the missing colonists the Marines discover that the aliens have cocooned the colonists and left eggs to impregnate them — thus ensuring further additions to the hive. As the team looks on, an alien is born.



SCREEEEEECH!

The screeching of the aliens has been recreated perfectly using samples from the film. Over 60% of the game's effects have been lifted directly from the films, including speech snippets and the effects for the drop ship landing during the first FMV sequence. Fox supplied the programmers with recordings of the individual effects, and when the intended effect was missing a degree of improvisation came into play — for instance, creating the noise of an egg cracking open was obtained by mixing Vaseline and jam together and squishing them together into a microphone!

The music duties were split between two professionals, with Steve Burt — a

keyboard player with Mike and the Mechanics and session musician with Barbra Streisand — adding the atmospheric tunes which accompany the blasting action, while the gung-ho FMV music was supplied by Bob Schumacher who is now working on Fleetwood Mac's brand new album.



LET'S ROCK!

Ripley begins her mission armed with a rather hopeless pistol, but this is easily upgraded as the game progresses. As with all the game's power-ups, more powerful guns have been left scattered around the play area by earlier Marine expeditions, and appear in order of power as a reward for progression through the labyrinthian levels — with Vasquez's Smartgun acting as the ultimate destructive incentive. Finding the shotgun is one of the first puzzles the player encounters as it has been hidden away in a room secured behind a series of locked doors, and new weapons are automatically added to an inventory. From here, they can then be selected either via this screen or, if in a hurry, using the L and R buttons — and the weapon will instantly revert to the next in power whenever the ammunition expires.



9MM PISTOL

The default weapon. Ripley begins the game armed with this, and ammo is plentiful, if lacking in power.



SHOTGUN

Based on Hicks' good luck charm from the second film, and useful when retreating from an oncoming alien warrior.



PULSE RIFLE

The marine corps equivalent of a machine gun, and is doubly effective with its built-in grenade launcher.



FLAMETHROWER

Weak in terms of taking out aliens, but visually very impressive. Best used in the egg chambers before Facehuggers emerge.



SMART GUN

As wielded by Drake and Vasquez in the second film. Devastating to the extreme, and can also throw seismic charges for extra damage.

MOBILE REPRODUCTION
ALIENS

Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) discovers two Facehuggers running free, their spidery legs sending them skittering fast over objects. They can also wrap themselves around a victim's head, using the tail to slowly throttle them into submission.



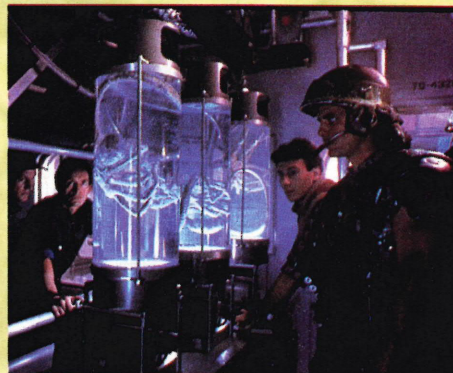
ALIEN TRILOGY™



'GET AWAY FROM HER YOU BITCH...'

With *Alien Trilogy* obviously comparable to *Doom*, Probe have tried to add as many ideas as possible to the original Id concept. Thus, in addition to the full 3D sprites, *Alien Trilogy* also plays host to end-of-level bosses and, logically enough, these are Queen aliens. And this is where Cliff really gets going: 'She's huge and when you go in, there are eggs everywhere. When you walk up to them they open, and a Facehugger will jump out. So you really want to blow away the eggs before they open, but this pisses off the Queen who's still attached to the egg sac. If she sees you she doesn't want to break away from the sac as you're not really screwing with her yet. She'll try to bite you, but she'll only go for you if you shoot her. At which point she breaks away from the sac (using an effect sampled from the film), and this thing is huge.'

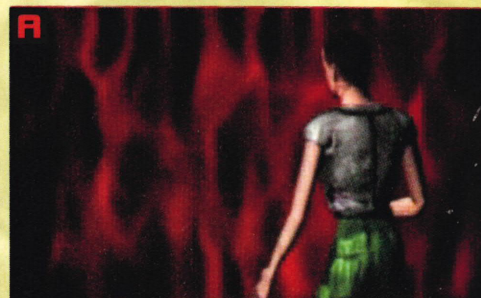
He continues: 'She's so big, and because of the 3D nature of the sprites, you can actually walk under her legs without ducking! Her crotch is six feet tall! And from a distance you can see her and shoot her, but when she gets closer you start to see only her crotch!' Producer's enthusing aside, the Queen sprite really is a credit to the motion-capture technology, and as the Queen attacks, her piston jaws snap, her four arms wave, she moves with incredible speed and, as Ripley found out, she's a bitch to kill. 'It's best to run away and pick at her from a distance,' he laughs.



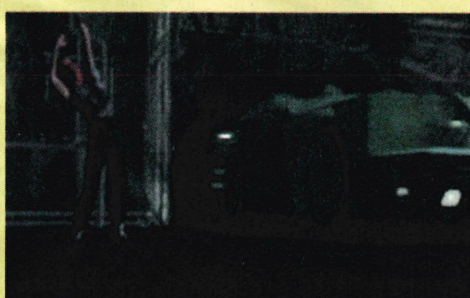
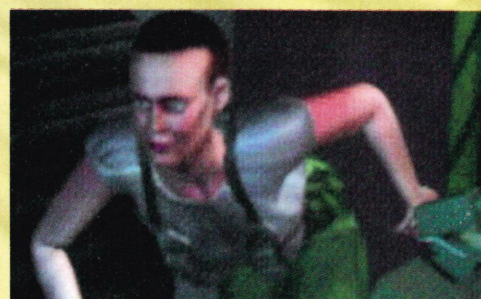
INTRO-VENOUS

The slight additions to the plot are explained away via a series of intermission FMV scenes. The intro sequence was completed two years ago when the game was in its embryonic stages, but has been smartened up considerably since we first saw it. It begins with a motion-captured Ripley deposited by the drop ship in a scene reminiscent of the section in *Aliens*. As Ripley runs a bypass, the door opens and the game begins. Acclaim's US motion-capture offices have really gone to town on the FMV sections, and a suitable cut scene appears at every opportune moment. 'We wanted to add a film quality to the game,' enthuses Cliff, 'and it gave us the chance to really push the motion-capture studio. As such, in addition to the intro sequence, there's a scene for Ripley leaving LV426, entering and

leaving the prison complex, and clambering into the 'Bone Ship.' Equally impressive, however, are the death scenes whenever Ripley is overwhelmed by the aliens. 'We wanted a different one for each way of dying,' Cliff continues, 'so if Ripley is attacked by a warrior, that's the ending you'll see. If she gets burnt by acid, bitten by the 'Bambi' alien, or whatever, there's an animation for each.'



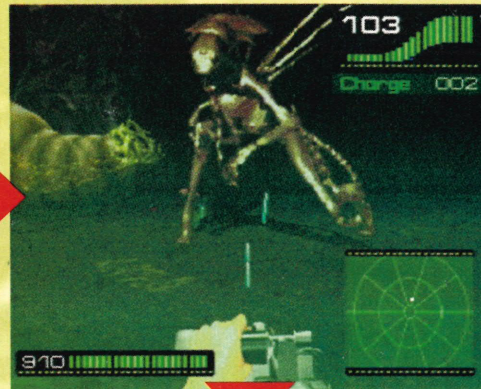
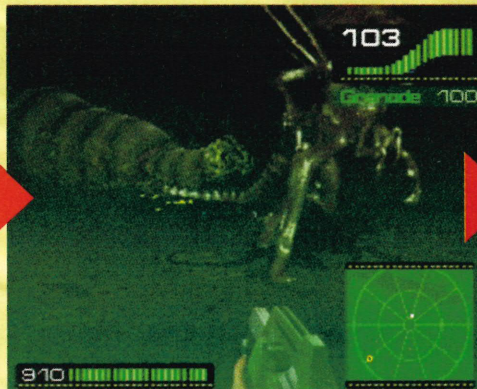
FMV PLAYS A HUGE PART IN LINKING THE THREE FILMS.



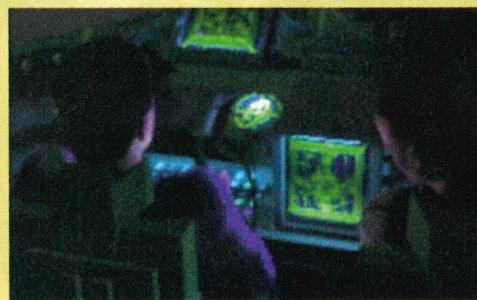
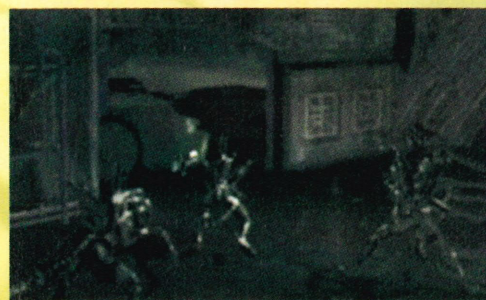
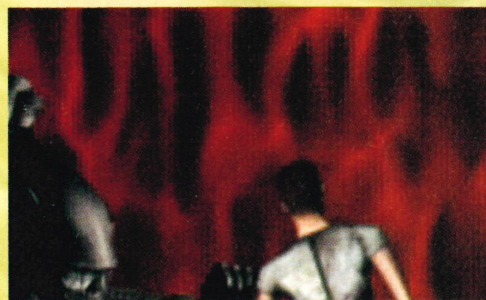
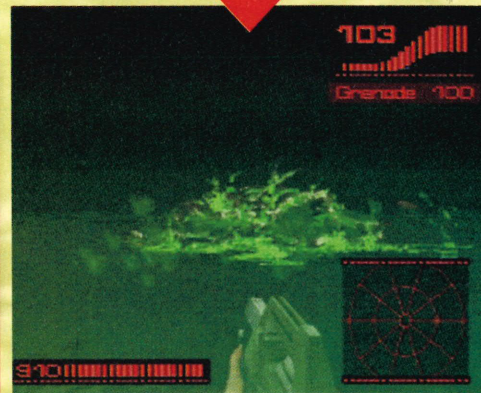
EGG-LAYING QUEEN ALIENS

Aliens took the 'insect' nature of the aliens to its logical conclusion when Ripley stumbled across the impressive bulk of the Queen. Attached to an egg sac and guarded by the warriors, the alien race comes full circle.





AN ALIEN EMERGES FROM THE MIST AS
THE PLAYER PREPARES A GRENADE.



DNA SPLICING

ALIEN 3

Alien 3 saw the concept of aliens cross-breeding with a host of creatures, and inheriting traits from them. This creature burst from a dog and so grew into a creature which was more adept at moving on four legs.



ALIEN TRILOGY™

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

Ripley begins the game with 100 life points, and these are whittled away during confrontations with the aliens and company guards. Death literally lurks around every corner, with aliens hanging from ceilings and leaping over walls, Facehuggers springing from holes in the wall, and puddles of acid spreading across the floor. Other hazards are slightly more obvious, but do give the Probe lads the chance to flex their designing muscle. One of the most impressive effects is a level in the bowels of the Acheron complex which is made up of pipes. Some of these have ruptured, though, and spew harmful steam at Ripley, reducing her energy a point at a time. 'The aliens are obviously the most dangerous adversary as they remove ten points with each swipe,' Cliff states, 'but we've tried to make it a little more tactical so the player learns ways to blast away while retreating at the same time. Of course, there are also aliens clinging on to the ceiling that only drop down when Ripley is directly underneath!'

A perfect example of this can be found in the innovative *Alien 3* section. Fans of the film will remember the scenes where the convicts and Ripley are trying to lock the alien in the tunnel complex so they can force it into the furnace. Probe have recreated this, and it is a stage Cliff is particularly proud of: 'You can kill the dog-aliens in this stage if you can find the big smart gun, but they are a hybrid strain of alien and very hard to kill. You can kill them by backing up and running while firing all the time – but you have to turn corners, so your best bet is to run, keep an eye on it and have it follow you. Then you hit the door switch, and (claps hands together) it slams. Then there's this big window in the door which you can shoot through to kill the alien. That's really cool.' And he's not wrong.



MORE ESSENTIAL READING

Titan and Boxtree Publishing's continuation of the *Alien* legend takes the acid-blooded monsters ever onward...

HIVE

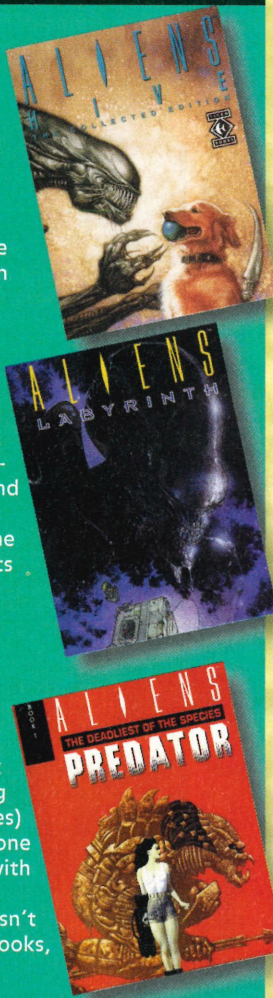
A scientist creates a robotic alien to infiltrate a hive and steal the life-giving royal jelly from the Queen's chamber. As ever, things don't go according to plan, and the scientist and his party become trapped on the barren planet. And then a party of Marines turn up unexpectedly...

LABYRINTH

More alien experimentation as a scientist apparently manages to suppress the aliens' natural desire to kill. But with martial law rapidly seizing hold of the base and so-called 'dissenters' going missing, only one woman is brave enough to uncover the horror behind the experiments. And meets the specially-created 'King' alien in the process.

ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR

The alien menace has apparently been vanquished, and humans are getting back to their normal lives – with the elite using trophy wives (genetically-created beauties) as the ultimate fashion accessory. When one trophy goes AWOL, though, and falls in with a Predator stalking the wrecked Earth, it soon becomes apparent the alien mance isn't as dead as once thought. Spanning two books, AVP adds DNA-splicing to the mix. Cool.



THE SMALL CALIBRE WEAPONS ARE BEST USED AGAINST THE GUARDS.

COMMENT

ALEX

I'm in two minds over *Alien Trilogy*. There's no denying it's a polished first-person blaster, and is one of the most atmospheric games I've played thanks to cool light-sourcing and sound effects. Still, personally I don't think it has the sheer adrenaline rush that makes *Doom* so intense – in comparison *Alien Trilogy* is almost laid back, with Ripley trudging slowly through the corridors, rather than rushing madly around, emptying ammo cartridges from the Pulse Rifle. Visually *Alien Trilogy* is awesome, with both the background graphics and characters sprites being more realistic and detailed than anything I've seen before. The true 3D graphics work exceptionally well, and combined with the motion-captured animation and sampled sound effects, *Alien Trilogy* really is a delight to behold. It's more structured than id's masterpiece too, and as a one-player game it's highly entertaining. Unfortunately it's not quite as exciting, partly due to the lack of a Deathmatch mode.

COMMENT

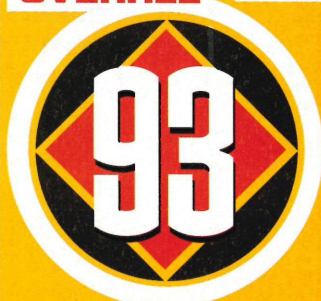
STEVE

I'm a massive fan of the *Alien* films, and on seeing the preview code a few months ago, I was really looking forward to getting to grips with *Alien Trilogy*. Well, forget what you saw in the preview, as *Alien Trilogy* far surpasses that initially impressive code. Fans of the films will love the samples, the moody atmosphere, and the aliens lifted from the trilogy, while game-players will just want to get in and blasting. The much-touted motion-capture is absolutely stunning and the aliens do actually work in 3D (although they get a little messy up close), and the use of *Doom*-style lighting makes them even eerier. For the game to work for me, it had to remain true to the films while supplying the much needed gameplay, and Probe have incorporated both beautifully. The action is as fast as *Doom*, but there's more to it, with the use of Queens, as bosses, inspired. Similarly, little touches like locking doors to secure aliens or watching a Chestbuster erupt just add to its overall appeal. This is, without a doubt, the best use of a film licence yet.

RATING

GRAPHICS	93
ANIMATION	91
SOUND FX	90
MUSIC	87
LASTABILITY	94
PLAYABILITY	93

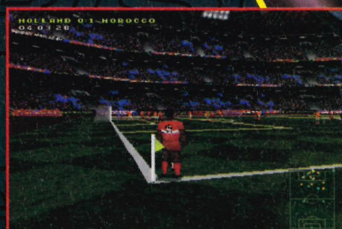
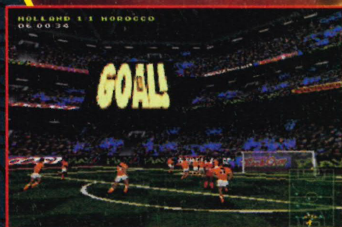
OVERALL



actua

SOCCER

PlayStation



"Actua Soccer is the most playable and realistic footy release on the PlayStation - and therefore the best... makes it's 32 bit peers look amateurish and shoddy"

GAME OF THE MONTH
SONYPRO

9/10

"Move over Striker '96, farewell FIFA, Actua Soccer is simply the best PlayStation footy game"

HIGHEST AWARD
PLAY

94%

"This is a perfect blend of superb graphics and involving gameplay. Technically excellent and decidedly playable. Actua Soccer delivers the lot"

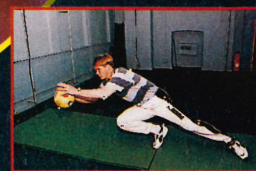
OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
MAGAZINE

9/10

"The greatest PlayStation football game to date..."

PLAYSTATION PLUS

■ Revolutionary football action sim ■ Realtime motion captured **top international footballers** ■ Full commentary by footballs' favourite **BARRY DAVIES!** ■ Like watching football on TV only you control the players and the game! ■ **44 teams** ■ Editable tactics ■ Cups, tournaments and leagues ■ **Real atmosphere** ■ **Real immersive** ■ **Real football!**



Featuring the unique talents of Barry Davies. Total interactive commentary from the U.K.'s no.1 voice of football

Real motion, captured from international footballers and used in the game

actua
SPORTS
SERIES

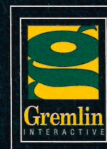
Featuring



Interactive
MotionTechnology

PC
CD-ROM

PlayStation



there's nothing virtual about actua

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AND...



THERE... HE...

GOES

Following the success of *WipeOut*, once again SIE feel the need for speed. In a special behind-the-scenes look, *PlayStation Plus* checks under its bonnet in the first of a series of pit reports.

For as long as there have been computers there have been racing games. The first Binatone consoles gave the player control over a small block which the player was left to guide past similar-looking squares on a permanently triangular course. Then the Atari VCS went one better by adding extremities to the square sprite (wheels, presumably) and replaced the triangular roads with curves to indicate cornering. From here, the racing game market went wild. *Pole Position*, Epyx's *Pitstop* duo, *Buggy Boy*, *Lombard RAC Rally* — for every new machine, a wealth of racing games would be warming up in the pits.

With a variety of vehicles on offer — from bikes, to buggies, to go-karts — programmers have always returned to the exotic realm of the Grand Prix racer as they attempt to bring the speed and skill needed by Formula One drivers to the latest home system. Until now, Geoff Crammond's *Formula 1 GP* for the PC has reigned supreme with its polygon cars offering the speed, while its options also allow the user to experience the tactical world of refits, practice, and managerial aspects of the pit team. SIE, however, are the latest pit team to challenge Crammond's untopped champion, and the early rumblings from Sony indicate that it could well be the video game equivalent of Michael Schumacher, which is set to streak ahead of the pack.



SCHUMACHER	ALESI
1:38.677	1:11.9



COMPANY	SIE
RELEASE	JULY
PRICE	TBA
PLAYERS	1-2
GENRE	RACING

Formula 1



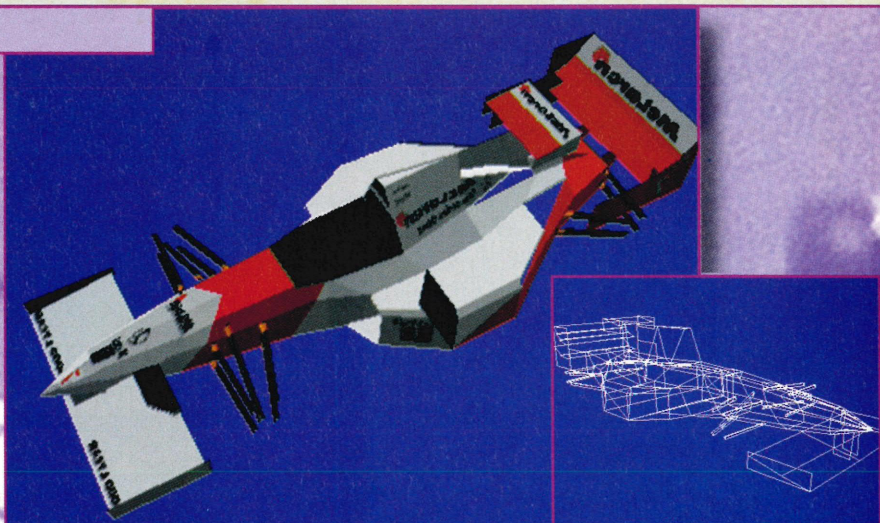
here's nothing quite like watching one of the international Grand Prix races on a Sunday. As Murray Walker goes typically over-the-top as the leaders overtake on corners, go spinning off into barriers, or a wheel flies into the crowd, the exhilaration of watching someone drive around hairpin bends at a staggering 250MPH could only be surpassed by driving the car yourself. As such, the perennial battle to bring the thrills of Formula 1 racing to a home system continues apace, with SIE the latest team to step up to the starting grid. The Liverpool-based team, however, already have one distinct advantage as they have secured the licence to the 1996 season. A side benefit of this includes full access to the thirteen teams, their

respective drivers' lists, and blueprints of the course maps and, as such, SIE are claiming their F1 game is set to be the most realistic to date — exceeding even Geoff Crammond's PC classic. To round things off, the team have also roped in Mr F1 Commentary himself, Murray Walker, to add voice to the proceedings.

The game is currently in the planning stages, with a number of cars rendered and dropped onto the one completed course. The game is currently scheduled for a July release to coincide with the new season, and in the next two months *PlayStation Plus* will be returning to take the new cars for a test drive. Could it be that, at long last, we can find out why Damon Hill is such a bad loser? He is in the SIE game, after all...

UNDER THE BONNET

The final code for Formula 1 will sport 26 cars, modelled from team diagrams, with additional material gleaned from video footage and photographic material. As with *WipeOut*, the cars are created as a 3D wire frame which allows the programmers to create them as proper objects as opposed to flat 2D cars as seen in, say, *Ridge Racer*. With the skeleton created, the paint detail and light effects can then be dropped on, and are automatically changed to reflect the weather conditions for each course. The cars' behaviour has also been added, and SIE have been given access to data taken from past races as to how vehicles handle under certain conditions, and the effect weather may have on cornering and overtaking.





REAL DEAL

Accuracy is the most important part of *Formula 1* to the SIE team. Securing the 1996 licence gave them access to blueprints of the official surveyor track maps, which detail the heights and widths of the courses, and these have been recreated for the game. The detail doesn't stop there, though, and repetitious viewing of videos has also allowed the graphic artists to add authentic backdrops, too – so if you're familiar with buildings in the Silverstone area, they'll be recreated in the final Sony code. Similarly, the advertising hoardings will also be recreated, with the only exception being any cigarette-related boards, as Sony frown upon links between fags and the PlayStation. SIE's agreement with FOCA (the licensor) also allows them to use all thirteen of the F1 teams, which means the final game will also boast 35 drivers, including the likes of Damon Hill, David Coulthard and Michael Schumacher.



SIE ARE PLANNING A SERIES OF VIEWS USING THE EXACT POSITIONS THE BBC SET THEIR CAMERAS. THESE CAN THEN BE USED BY THE PLAYER TO REPLAY THEIR GREATEST RACING ACHIEVEMENTS FROM VIRTUALLY ANY ANGLE.

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION

In past video game attempts at recreating the thrills of F1 racing, the opposing cars have been basic drones which, while differing in speed, have no real intelligence to speak of. In the SIE game, however, each of the opposing drivers has a preset strategy and constantly adapt their plans in accordance with events in the race. Skilled drivers, for example, will drive in an opponent's slipstream for minimal wind resistance, before whizzing past on the straight. Similarly, attempts to add traits from the drivers themselves has been incorporated, with some courteous in the course of a race, while others detest being overtaken – and you can expect Schumacher to bang into your car in order to secure victory, no doubt!



KEEP IT SIMPLE

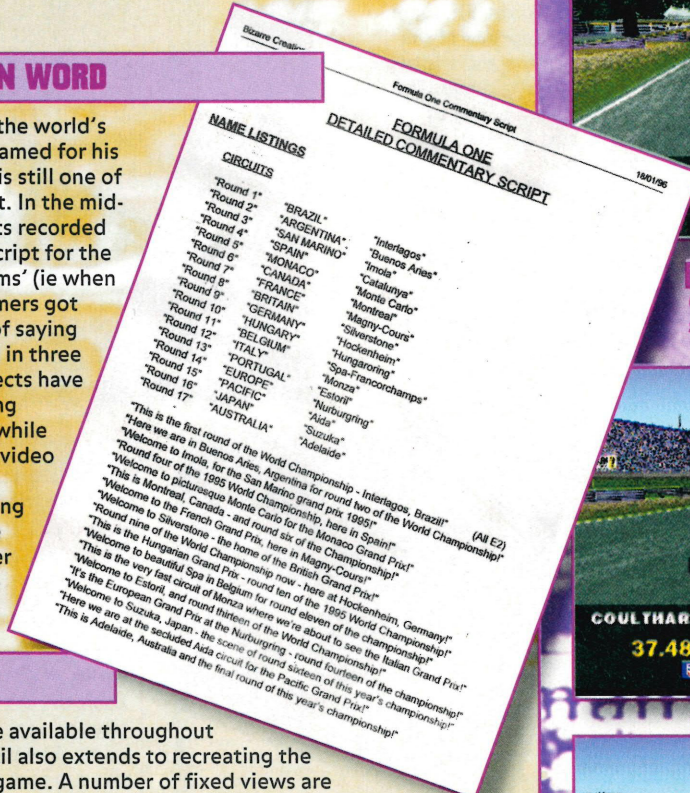
While SIE are aiming to make *Formula 1* as realistic as possible, the game will feature modes to allow the player to opt for a more simplistic driving game as opposed to the full season. As such, if changing gears, modifying tactics and the like aren't your bag, then an 'arcade' mode will offer a more simplistic *Virtua Racing*-style game, wherein the competitor can opt to race CPU-controlled cars — or a second player via the serial cable — across any one of the courses. The arcade mode also negates some of the more finicky problems the 'serious' racer may opt for, including tyre changes, collision damage, and pit stops.



THE SPOKEN WORD

Murray Walker is, without a doubt, the world's greatest Grand Prix commentator. Famed for his ill-fated comment and mistakes, he is still one of the greatest authorities on the sport. In the middle of January, SIE's sound recordists recorded Murray speaking over 25 pages of script for the final game. In addition to 'Murrayisms' (ie when he gets a tad excited), the programmers got him to record three different ways of saying key phrases to avoid repetition, and in three states of excitement. The in-car effects have been recreated using a DAT recording which used samples from test laps, while pit effects have been sampled from video footage.

On the music front, SIE are planning three tracks from rock guitarists Joe Santini and Steve Vai, while a further twelve tracks are being recorded in-house at their Liverpool offices.



ZOOM WITH A VIEW

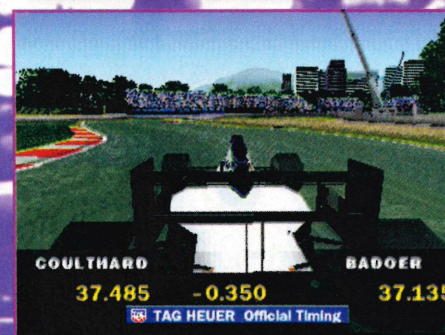
Television-style presentation will be available throughout the game, and the attention to detail also extends to recreating the BBC's camera positions in the final game. A number of fixed views are available during the races, with the cameras intelligently flicking to those offering the best view as the player whizzes around the corners. The more egotistical racer will also be able to replay entire races over and over with the mooted possibility of saving replays to a memory card, while the rest of us will no doubt just watch the visually impressive skids, spins and high-impact crashes time and time again!



THE CARS REACT DIFFERENTLY TO WEATHER CONDITIONS, WITH RAIN MAKING CORNERING CONSIDERABLY HARDER, AND OBSCURING THE DRIVER'S VIEW.



THE CARS ARE EXACT RECREATIONS USING BLUEPRINTS FROM THE 1995 SEASON COMPETITORS.



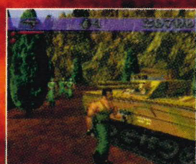
NEXT MONTH WE'LL BE INTERVIEWING THE SIE TEAM, AND BRINGING YOU MORE DETAILED COURSE AND CAR SCREENSHOTS.

IF YOU WANT MORE VIOLENCE ON T.V.

LONE SOLDIER



STICK THIS GRENADE IN YOUR "PLAYSTATION"!



"...blows the roof off the 'Doom' genre"

Rated: 92%

PLAY 

"Pure arcade frenzy over a massive variety of levels, combining pumping 3D action and awesome firepower. This is exactly what we want."

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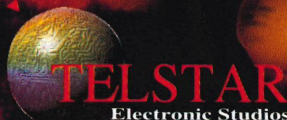
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AVAILABLE
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PAL



COMPANY	EA
RELEASE	MARCH
PRICE	£44.99
PLAYERS	1-2
GENRE	RACING



The quest for the perfect PlayStation racer continues, with EA set to take on Namco's mighty *Ridge Racer* with a conversion of their 3DO hit, *The Need for Speed*. Endorsed by US car mag, *Road and Track*, *The Need for Speed* offers the player eight vehicles, ranging from a top-of-the-range Ferrari to a poxy Mazda, and invites them to race across five locations. In terms of appearance, *The Need for Speed* is a more detailed version of the Namco game, with the chosen vehicle viewed from behind, and the opposing CPU-controlled streaming past in the time-honoured fashion. Similarly, in order to add a little variety to the proceedings, the five tracks offer different racing conditions, from the obligatory snow and great outdoors locations, to cities and coastal courses.

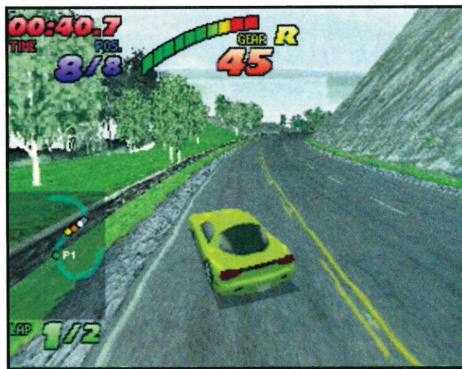
The racing takes the form of either a one or two-player game, and can be played over a number of courses or as individual races. As ever, the basic aim is to take your vehicle and roar to the finishing post before the opposition. Where *The Need for Speed* is supposed to leave its opposition standing, however, is in terms of realism. While the game is very much arcade-orientated, with minimal gear usage and controls, the car is extremely responsive and skids and turns with more realism than the Namco vehicles – it even leaves tyre tracks in its wake! *The Need for Speed* is currently 70% complete with the final game intelligence being added, but a full review is set for this very magazine next issue.



The Need For Speed

FOUR VROOMS

Pressing the triangle button on the joypad, allows the player to switch between four views of their car. The default view shows the road ahead as seen from the driver's seat, with the dashboard running along the bottom, displaying the expected speedometers and the like. A second press gives an out of car experience and offers a close-up view of the brake lights as the game follows directly behind the car, while a little more distance and a *Ridge Racer*-style view is available following another press. If these aren't to your liking, though, a further press offers a view of just the road itself, with all the speed indicators kept off screen in order to offer the fastest road update in the game.



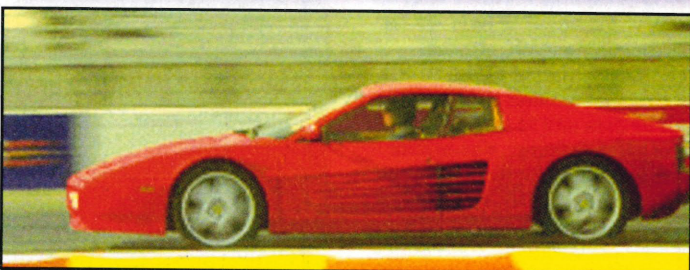
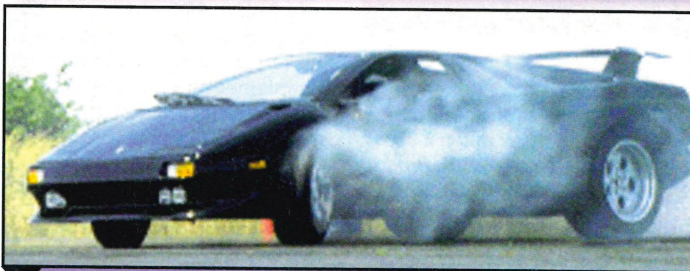
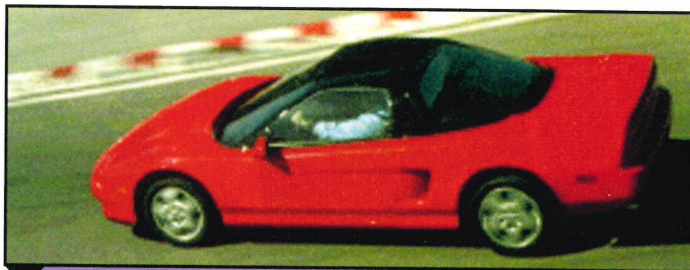
WHAT CAR

Boasting specifications lifted from *Road and Track*, *The Need for Speed* has eight cars within its CD garage. Upon loading, the player is shown an options screen through which the cars can be selected. However, with the PlayStation offering FMV possibilities, EA have gone one step further and incorporated what appear to be mini episodes of *Top Gear* regarding the performance of each vehicle. Thus, if you're undecided between the Dodge Viper or a Corvette, allow the smarmy American version of Jeremy Clarkson to brief you on acceleration and cornering details as you watch the cars in action. Then decide.

ROAD TO NOWHERE

The Need for Speed also boasts two dual-player modes. Two machines can either be linked up – a la *Ridge Racer Revolution* – and played as full-screen games, or there is a split-screen mode which allows two people to play on the same machine. Following the disappointment of *Hi-Octane*'s sluggish split-screen mode, EA have learnt from their mistake, and *The Need for Speed* avoids any such problems. The only compromise is that the obvious lack of height to each screen means the backdrops feature a tad less detail, but the speed is roughly 90% as fast as the full-screen game. Sadly, due to memory limitations, it is now looking unlikely that EA's team will be able to combine the two and offer a four-player mode courtesy of two linked dual-player machines.

SMASHING INTO YOUR OPPONENT SENDS THEM SPINNING, ALLOWING YOU TO OVERTAKE.



EACH OF THE VEHICLES IS DETAILED USING A TOP GEAR-STYLE FMV SEQUENCE, WHICH ALSO LISTS THEIR ACCELERATION AND SIMILAR CAPABILITIES.

Pro Pinball

RELEASE	APRIL
PRICE	TBA
BY	EMPIRE
PLAYERS	1-4
GENRE	PINBALL



Empire Interactive has taken a bit of a risk with *Pro Pinball: The Web*.

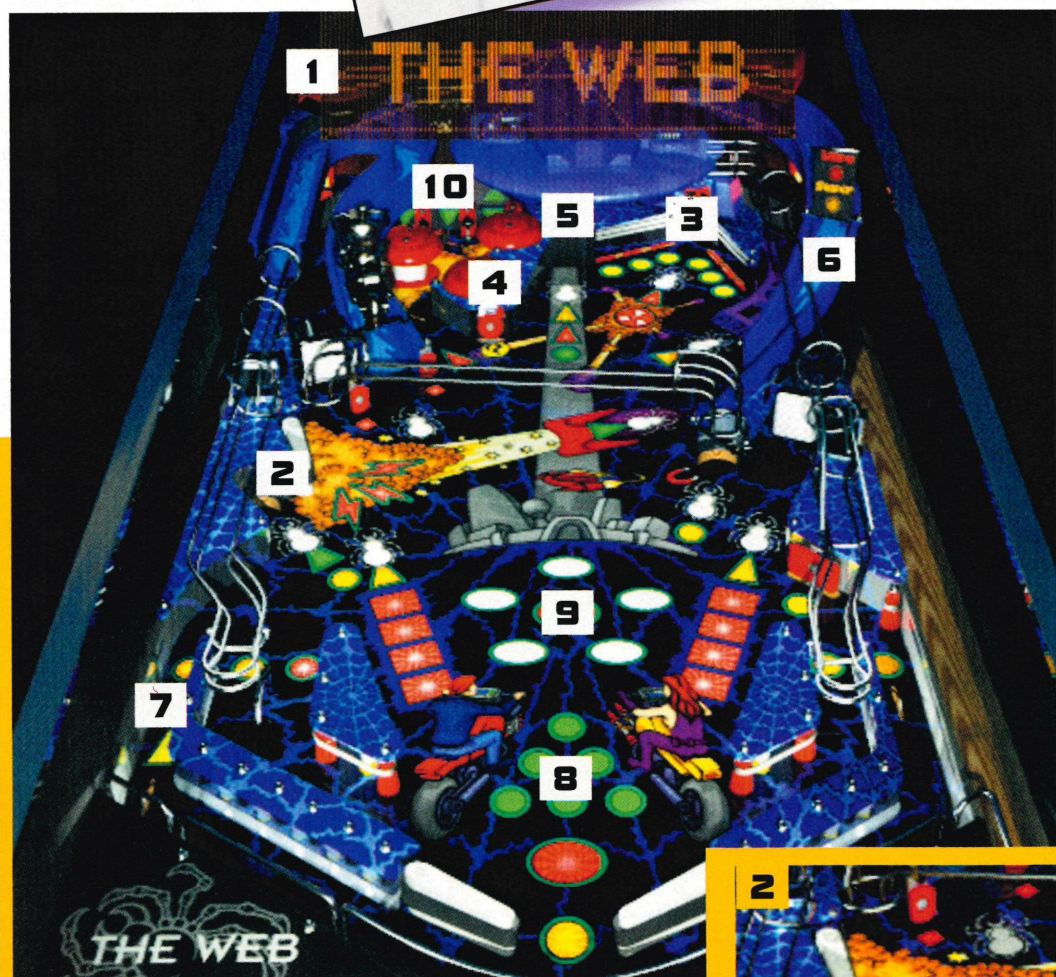
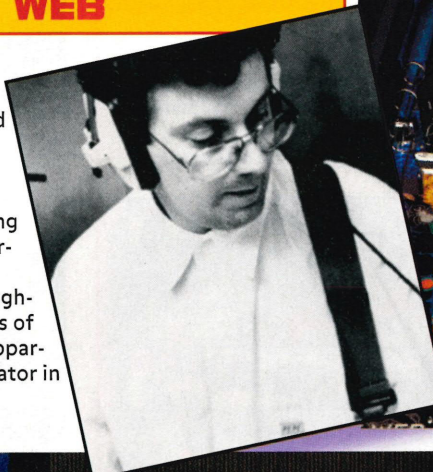
While *True Pinball* and the forthcoming *Tilt* offer a selection of tables to play on, *Pro Pinball* only features one. So why the change? Simple. As far as developers ODE are concerned simulating a true-to-life pinball table takes up a hell of a lot of data and so to cram in all the game features, dot-matrix read-outs and digital sound effects a entire CD is needed. So, rather than feature half a dozen or so sub-standard tables, Empire has opted for one mutha of a table.

It looks like the risk has paid off too, as *The Web* has all the features of a real-life table, and many more besides. Although completely original in design, *The Web* 'borrows' some of the best elements from many of the most popular pinball tables of the past few years. Seasoned pinball players may, for example, notice the striking familiarities between the *Bike Ramp* featured *Pro Pinball* and the *Beta Quadrant* on the *Star Trek: the Next Generation* table.

Many of the usual pinball features have been squeezed into, the table packed with drop targets, ramps, jet bumpers and even the cool *Ultimate Showdown* in which player must cope with the awesome six ball multiball! There's also the sub-games that appear on the dot-matrix screen at the top of the table, in which big points are earned by destroying the incoming mines using the flipper keys. Best of all are the countless play modes, including *Space Station Frenzy*, *Bike Race Challenge* and *Destroy Ammo Dump*, as well as loads of hidden features to discover. So, with all these secret bonuses a billion-breaking score should not be too far off.

ROCKIN' ALL OVER THE WEB

Bruce Foxton and Jake Burns of The Jam and Stiff Little Fingers fame created the 22 audio tracks featured in *Pro Pinball*, so expect power chords and wicked guitar riffs twanging complementing the flipper-flicking action. Sampled speech also features throughout, using the voice talents of Monica Buford who was apparently the voice of the elevator in *Blade Runner*. Coo.



A-Z OF THE WEB

The *Web* pinball table is crammed with jackpots, features and secrets. You've just got to know how to access them...



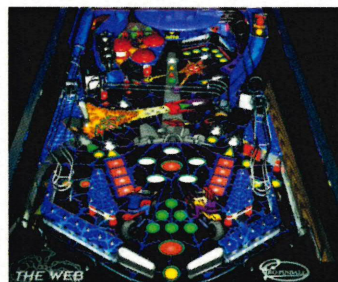
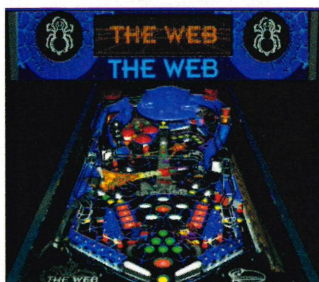
Dot-Matrix Display
Use the sink hole below the mid-left flipper to access the dot-matrix sub-game.



Grab Magnet
Light the grab magnet by shooting the Explosion hole. Now shoot at the ramp on the right.

POLISHING THE TABLE

Pro Pinball's presentation is gorgeous. The table has been rendered using Silicon Graphics technology, with every minute detail painstakingly created, from the metal runners that reflect the flashing lights to the dazzling loops, orbit and drop targets. Unlike most other pinball games *Pro Pinball* doesn't scroll, and instead views the table from one of six angles. This gives the game a more realism, allowing players to set up shots more effectively rather than hitting the flipper and hoping for the best. High resolution graphics ensure the table is clearly laid out and defined, so shooting for the bonus multiplier at the very back of the table is just as easy as going for the left and right ramps. Better still, the game runs at a staggering sixty frames a second, so it's just as frantic as the real thing.



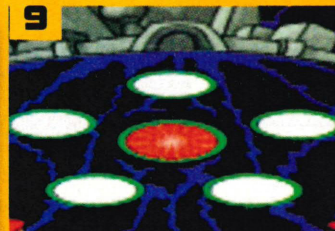
PREVIEW



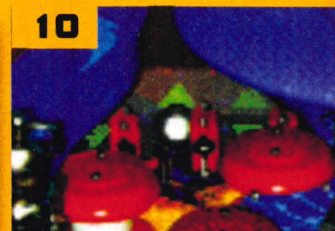
7 Kickback
Lit by hitting the square target on the right. Erm, kicks the ball back into play.



8 Central Lights
As each of the six missions is completed, so one of these lights is lit.



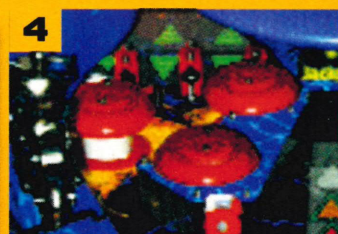
9 Ultimate Showdown
Just switch on each of these lights to initiate the awesome six-ball multiball!



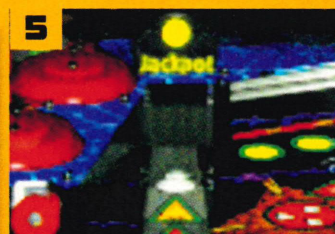
10 Bonus Multipliers
Illuminate all three of these lights to increase the bonus multiplier.



3 Drop Targets
The two sets of three drop targets are found at the top, and are used during the Reactor Critical mission.



4 Jet Bumpers
The cluster of three jet bumpers are huddled in the top-left. When Super Jets are activated the bumpers flash.



5 Central Sinkhole
Just shoot the Mission Start sinkhole to grab the jackpot. Hitting it repeatedly increases the points awarded.



6 Ramps
Shooting up either the left or right ramp locks the ball, and both can also be used to access Combo Mania.

COMPANY	KONAMI
RELEASE	JUNE
PRICE	TBA
PLAYERS	1
GENRE	ADVENTURE



eez, the story behind *Policenauts* is more complicated and confusing than an episode of *Twin Peaks*. In German. In the year 2010 mankind finally stretches out into space with the completion of the first space colony, codenamed Beyond Coast. Five of Earth's elite cops are assigned to protect the colony, until one day Jonathan Ingram mysteriously disappears during an experimental space-walk. 25 years later he's found alive, frozen inside his life capsule.

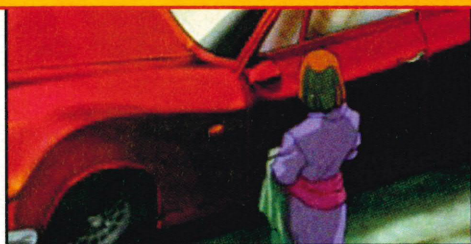
Returned to Earth immediately, as part of Ingram's rehabilitation into society he's allowed to start up his own private investigation agency whose first customer happens to his estranged wife. Since Ingram's disappearance Lorraine has remarried, but her new bloke has vanished without a trace. With no one to turn to, she's decided to call upon the services of her ex-husband to find her new husband. Phew...

Anyway, hidden somewhere beneath this bizarre storyline is a game. A point and click adventure in fact, in which the player assumes the role of John Ingram searching for the bloke who jumped into bed with his wife and soon as he stepped out of the door. Most men would seek revenge, by squeezing the KY jelly from the tube and replacing it with Ralgex cream or maybe pin-pricking the condoms hidden in the bedside cabinet. But no, you've got to solve the mystery of the missing man, just so he can come back and shag your missus. Life is just so unfair.

Policenauts



DEAD ON ARRIVAL



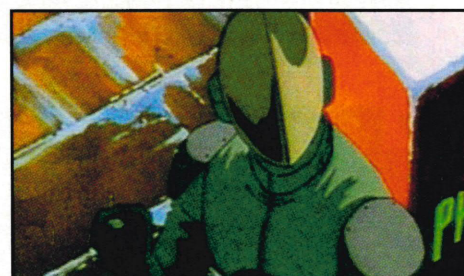
The disappearance of Kenzo Hojyo was strange. As Lorraine leaves his office, Ingram starts to piece together the clues surrounding the mystery.

LOST IN SPACE

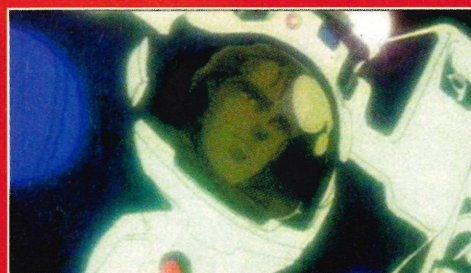
Policenauts opens with a Manga intro sequence that depicts the last few moments of Jonathan Ingram's life.



Something just isn't right. Looking out into the street, Ingram notices an armour-clad soldier lurking in the shadows. Shit, an assassin!



Grabbing his gun from the desk, Ingram runs out of his office. Meanwhile, the assassin watches as Lorraine walks over to her car.



Outside the space colony Beyond Coast, courageous Policenaut Jonathan Ingram is the first officer to test run the new jet-assisted space-suit.



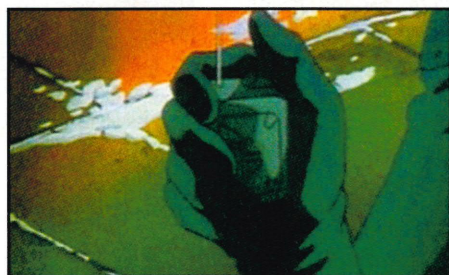
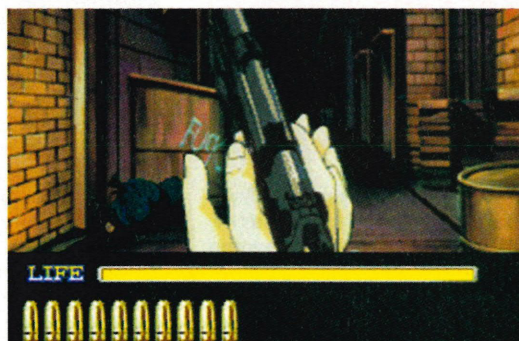
Back aboard Beyond Coast, the other Policenauts frantically scan the flashing computer panels, checking the suit's status. So far so good.



Manoeuvring around the massive space station, a flashing light alerts Ingram to a suit malfunction. Glancing down, it seems one of the thrusters has failed.

LETHAL WEAPON

Although *Policenauts* is primarily a Manga graphic adventure, there are also action scenes in which Ingram draws his gun and fights it out *Virtua Cop*-style. Although the mouse offers precise control over the gun, *Policenauts* is also compatible with Konami's Hyper Blaster light gun.



Pulling out a remote control device from his pocket, the killer primes the detonator. The bomb under Lorraine's car is activated.



Damn! Panic rushes across the faces of the tech-officers aboard the space station as Ingram starts to spin, pirouetting wildly out of control.



Flashing back to Lorraine, she climbs in the car blissfully unaware of her imminent death. Ingram charges around the corner, screaming at his ex...



One of the jets has locked on full thrust, propelling Ingram away from the Beyond Coast. The combined force of the other thrusters is not enough to slow him down...

THE PLOT THICKENS

Three clues were left behind after the disappearance of Lorraine's husband: a torn leaf, a medicine capsule and a piece of paper marked with the name 'Pluto'. As Ingram you must piece together the clues and, teaming up with your Policenaut colleagues from 30 years ago, it's time to venture back to Beyond Coast.



Business is slow. With nothing better to do, memories of his wife Lorraine flood through his mind. Picking up his gun, Ingram raises the barrel to his mouth.



Ingram's ex-wife, now 30 years his elder, looks haggard from old-age and worry. When the Policenaut was declared missing, presumed dead, Lorraine remarried.



Still desperately in love with Lorraine, Ingram decides to her out. It's going to cost her a hell of a lot more than a couple of thousand credits though.

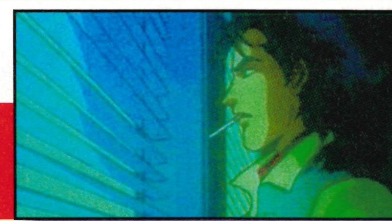
30 years after his mysterious disappearance, Jonathan Ingram is rehabilitated back into LA's seedy 21st century community through his detective agency.



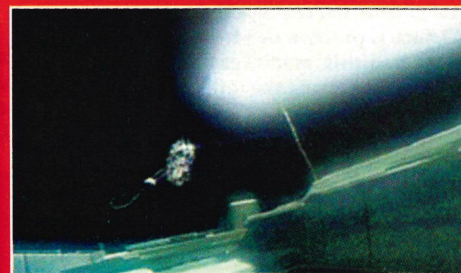
Slowly drawing back the trigger, Ingram's silence is suddenly interrupted as the door to his office is flung open. Standing in the hallway is Lorraine.



Her current husband, Kenzo Hojyo, has vanished though, and now she needs Ingram's help to uncover the mystery that surrounds his disappearance.



...but it's too late! The car explodes in a huge ball of flame. Ingram is thrown to the ground by the blast as bits of his ex-wife are spattered on the pavement. Ergh.



As the life-line snaps, Ingram is left to drift helplessly into space. His only hope now is to climb inside the suit's hypersleep capsule and pray he's picked up by a rescue team.

Brain Dead 13

RELEASE	MARCH
PRICE	TBA
BY	EMPIRE
PLAYERS	1
GENRE	ARCADE



Brain Dead 13 hails a new era for coin-op veterans ReadySoft. The Canadian softco's back catalogue, including the revolutionary laser disc 'classic' *Dragon's Lair*, was greeted with mixed criticism. No amount of cosmetic gloss could paint over the gaping holes in gameplay and as such ReadySoft's titles looked as good as a Disney cartoon, but unfortunately they were about as interactive. All this may change with imminent release of *Brain Dead 13*. Slipping into the scuffed Reebok's of computer repairman Lance, the plot follows his farcical attempts to escape the clutches of weirdo Doctor Nero Neurosis and its Igor-esque sidekick/pet thing, Fritz.

Kept under wraps since development began way back in April 1994, *Brain Dead 13* is the game ReadySoft is hoping will get them recognised for producing top-notch arcade games rather than lame conversions of archaic laser disc coin-ops. *Brain Dead 13* is a brand new game that retains the slick cartoon graphics and sound of its arcade parents, but finally a little more attention has been paid to gameplay. As a result *Brain Dead 13* isn't completely linear and unplayable, and Lance is pretty much free to explore Neurosis' manky castle, providing he dodges the lethal tricks and traps laid at every corner. The game is also made slightly more varied with the inclusion of mirror-imaged sections and random events, so the chances of playing exactly the same game time after time are, thankfully, extremely slim.

Then again, so are your chances of escaping from the hooked claws of the gruesome ghoul, Fritz.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Unlike *Dragon's Lair* and virtually every other ReadySoft title, *Brain Dead 13* isn't extremely limited and straight-forward. The game is structured in such a way that if Lance gets stuck on a particularly nasty puzzle, he's free to turn around and explore a different section of Doctor Neurosis' vast castle. Having said that, every puzzle must be solved in order to escape.



WHICH WAY NOW, LANCE?



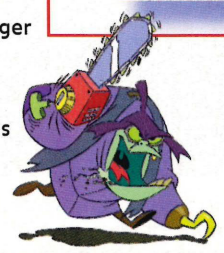
THANKFULLY BRAIN DEAD 13 ISN'T QUITE AS LINEAR AS PREVIOUS READYSOFT GAMES.



WHEN LANCE REACHES A JUNCTION HE CAN TAKE ANY OF THE EXITS TO THE NEXT SECTION OF THE CASTLE.

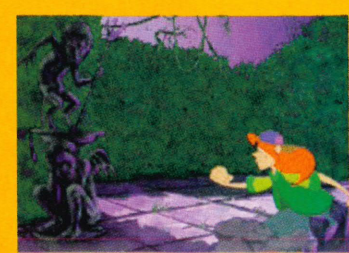
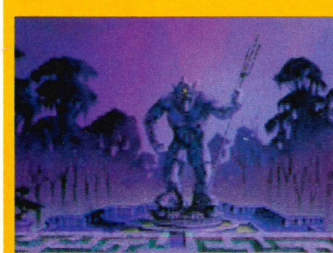
TIME TO DIE

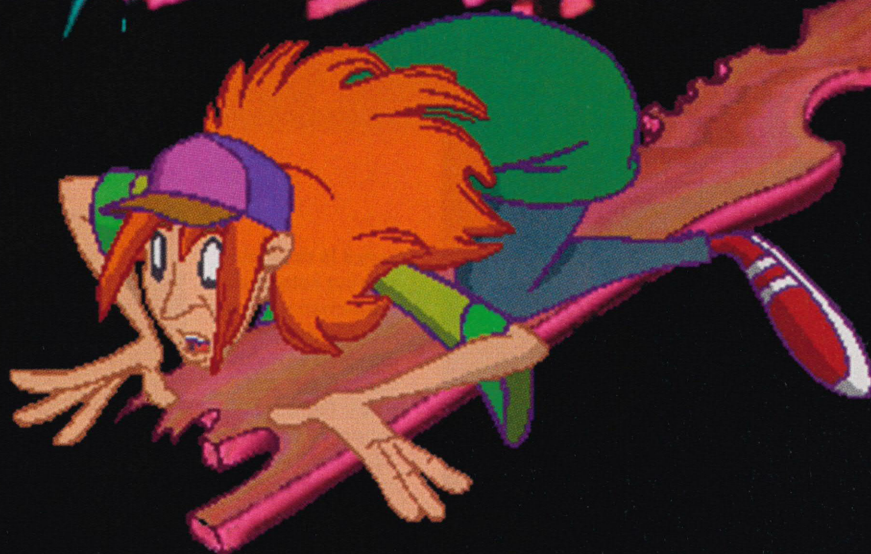
If it's variety you're after, *Brain Dead 13* is packed with loads of nasty ways to die. Take a wrong turn in the castle maze and Lance is gulped down by a man-eating python, or maybe even skewered on rusty spikes sticking out from the ground. Inside the castle, Vivi stalks the hapless Lance, looking for young blood to feed on or even just to nibble on a finger or two. Worst still, if Fritz catches up with Lance he's shredded into mince-meat. Ergh!



MAZED AND CONFUSED

When Lance finally escapes from the castle he ends up running through the ornamental gardens, chased by the growling Fritz. Negotiating the maze is pot luck, so working out the correct route through the undergrowth is more a matter of trial and error rather than skill. At the centre of the maze, something very nasty indeed awaits poor Lance...





PROFESSIONAL ANIMATORS
WORKED FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS
SOLID TO GIVE BRAIN DEAD 13
ITS DISTINCTIVE CARTOON STYLE.

PERFECT TIMING

Although *Brain Dead 13* isn't as linear as the majority of ReadySoft's other games, the gameplay is just as simple. Avoiding death isn't through any great feat of skill or judgment, it's just a case of moving the Dpad in the right direction at the right time. Groan.

LANCE LOSES HIS HEAD WHEN HE MEETS THE VOLUPTUOUS VIVI THE VAMPIRE. GROAN.

THE BOGGLE-EYED HAG COOKS UP THE SPECIAL OF THE DAY - LANCE!



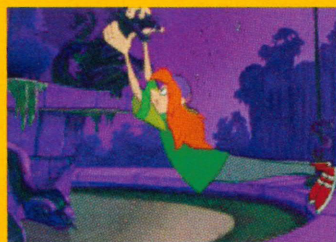
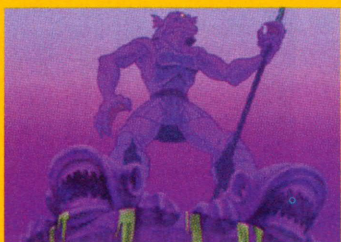
REMEMBER KIDS, DON'T USE TOO MUCH SOAP...



THE ONCE-CREDIBLE COMPUTER REPAIRMAN LANCE LOSES FACE.



JUST ONE OF THE MANY WAYS TO DIE IN BRAIN DEAD 13.



DROP DEAD GORGEOUS

Brain Dead 13's striking cartoon graphics were created by a team of over 40 animators, many of whom had previously worked on kids cartoons such as *Beetlejuice* and even played a hand in numerous feature films from Steven Spielberg's animation studios in London. The game's graphics were created using the same process as a proper cartoon, each cell of animation painstakingly drawn then scanned into computer and digitally touched up.



DISPOSABLE HEROES

LANCE

Lance is the caring, sharing computer repairman who can fix anything from mangled Macs to conked-out consoles. Called to Neurosis' castle to help build the weird *Brain Dead 13* contraption, he must escape before Fritz hacks him into tiny pieces.



FRTZ

Doctor Neurosis' weird half-pet, half-thing will stop at nothing to grab hold of the hapless Lance. The pale-skinned freak can swap his lethal hook-hands for arm-mounted cannons, chainsaws, axes... If it's sharp, Fritz has got it stashed away under his cloak!



DOCTOR NERO NEUROSIS

Being little more than a brain floating in a jar of water obviously has its drawbacks, and as such Doctor Nero Neurosis is finding his plans to overthrow the world a little more difficult than planned. However, if Lance can be 'persuaded' construct the *Brain Dead 13* beast, then we're all doomed...



VIVI THE VAMPIRE

With Vivi the Vampire there's no such thing as an innocent kiss. Lance's bursting veins are fruitful pickings, so Vivi will try anything to give the geeky teenager a love-bite he'll never forget.



MOOSE

One of Doctor Neurosis' most fiendish creations, Moose isn't too bright but more than makes up for his lack of grey matter with sheer brute strength. Don't bother fighting this fearsome freak, outwit him using skill and cunning.





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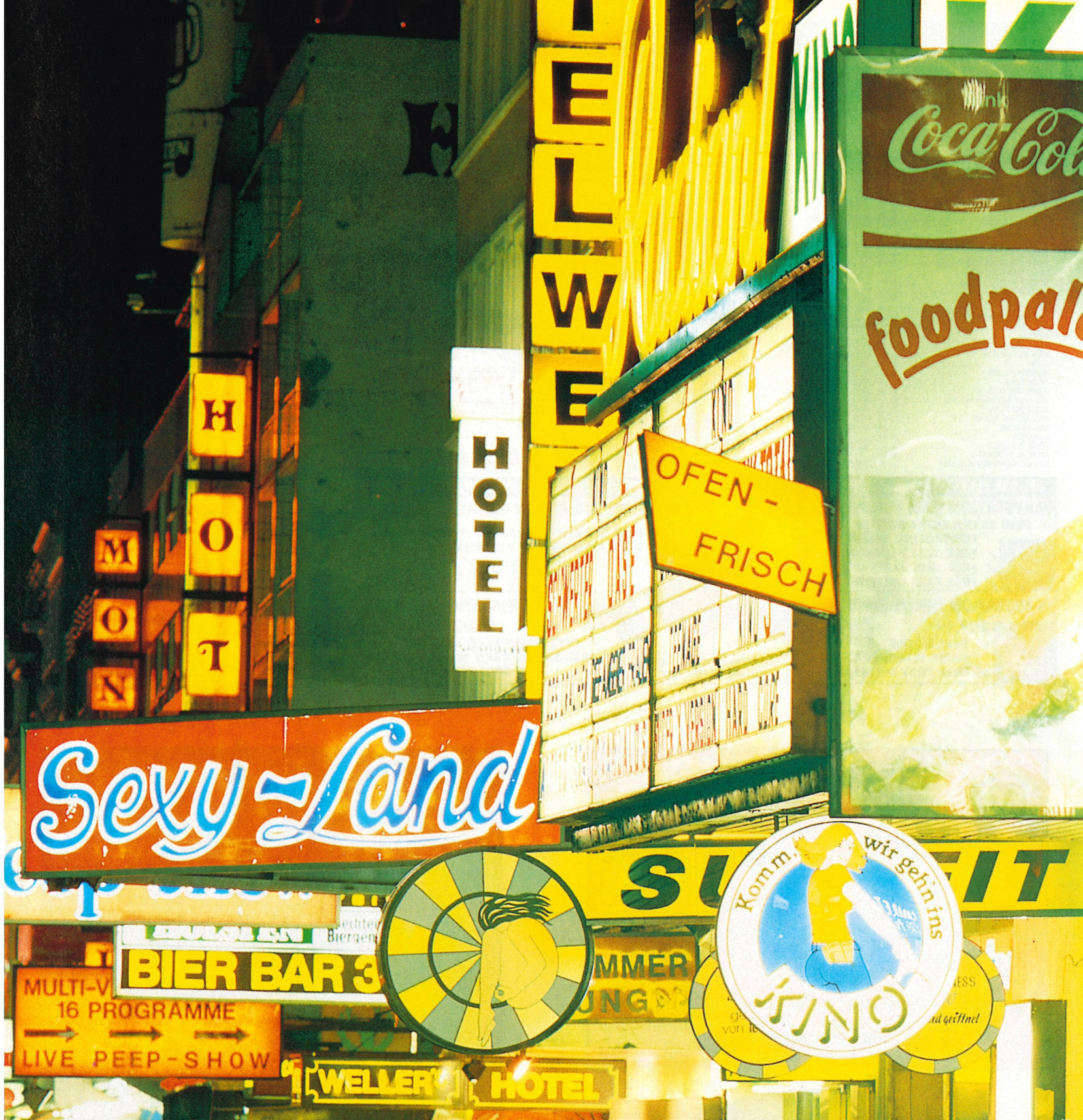
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Think of the word 'neon'. Think of the country Germany. Now connect the two. You'd be forgiven if, like our picture editor, you immediately visualise Hamburg's notorious Reeperbahn; a street where neon signs announcing 'girls, girls, girls' and 'striptease' hang from every wall, while down below sailors whack each other with bottles and fat frauleins in purple panties offer intricate biology lessons at 65 Deutschmarks a pop (er... or so a friend says).

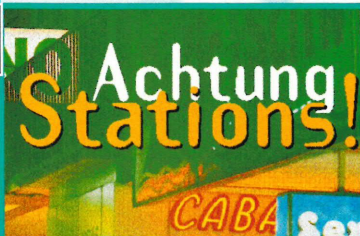
To our reporter's obvious disappointment, our story takes place some 250 miles further south, in the town of Darmstadt. Six young PlayStation coders based there liked the word 'neon' so much they bought the company. Neon Software. You probably haven't heard of them. Their only game to date,

Mr Nutz on the Commodore Amiga, was released before they adopted the name.

So what's so hot about this programming team that it justifies seven pages in Britain's leading PlayStation mag? More to the point, why has Ocean Software pumped a load of money into the company in exchange for an exclusive five year development deal? We sent **Adam Peters** over the border to rummage through Neon's hard disks and see what he could find. He came back with glowing words and see-for-yourself pictures of the company's first three products. Though at various stages of development, all three titles are scheduled for release on the PlayStation before Christmas. Are they going to be worth putting on your list for Santa?

Achtung! Stations!





Darmstadt is an industrial town of 150,000 people, lying some 15 miles south of Europe's financial capital, Frankfurt. Though Darmstadt dates from the Middle Ages, it would be hard to tell that from its current appearance. The town was one of the most heavily bombed during the last war, due to its industrial importance, and drab modern office blocks now occupy what used to be a medieval town centre. It is in one of these office blocks that we find Neon Software, the newest stars of German games programming. Their offices are conveniently located literally round the corner from our hotel, though obviously we didn't know that, which is why we've just made a 100 yard journey by taxi. The cabbie looks very annoyed, but we feel strangely decadent.

Neon's offices, which they only moved into two weeks ago, are strangely decadent too. We're not talking polished chrome and velvet here, but the light, airy rooms, oak beamed ceilings and pristine, tidy worktops are a far cry from the working conditions of most British programming teams; out of town 'business centres' with skips in the car park, plywood walls, dirt-caked windows and so little storage space that every surface (including the ceiling) is covered in a two inch thick melee of disks, magazines and long forgotten Post-It notes.

Maybe German offices are generally of a higher quality. Perhaps they're tidier and more house-proud people. Maybe they just haven't had time to trash the place yet. What's certain is that the size and state of the offices give some clue as to the amount of investment British software house Ocean are putting into Neon. The Manchester-based company have tied the German programmers to an exclusive development deal, currently running up to the end of the year 2000. Neon currently have three games being developed simultaneously; *Tunnel B1* and *Viper* are vehicle-based shoot-em-ups, both being written on the PlayStation; *Vanishing Powers* is a PC-led arcade adventure. Ocean hope to have all three titles on the shelves by Christmas across all three premium formats - PlayStation, Saturn, PC.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

The people behind Neon have been working in the games industry for many years, programming for both established software houses and fly-by-night German companies. After producing *Mr Nutz* for the Amiga, they got Ocean interested in the game and were also asked to produce a Megadrive version. "We wanted to get into consoles," says Neon's Peter Thierolf, "and this seemed the perfect opportunity. Previously programming had been more of a hobby, we hadn't really been getting paid for it. In the end, *Mr Nutz* on the Megadrive never came out. There were lots of bugs in it, and we already moved onto better projects."

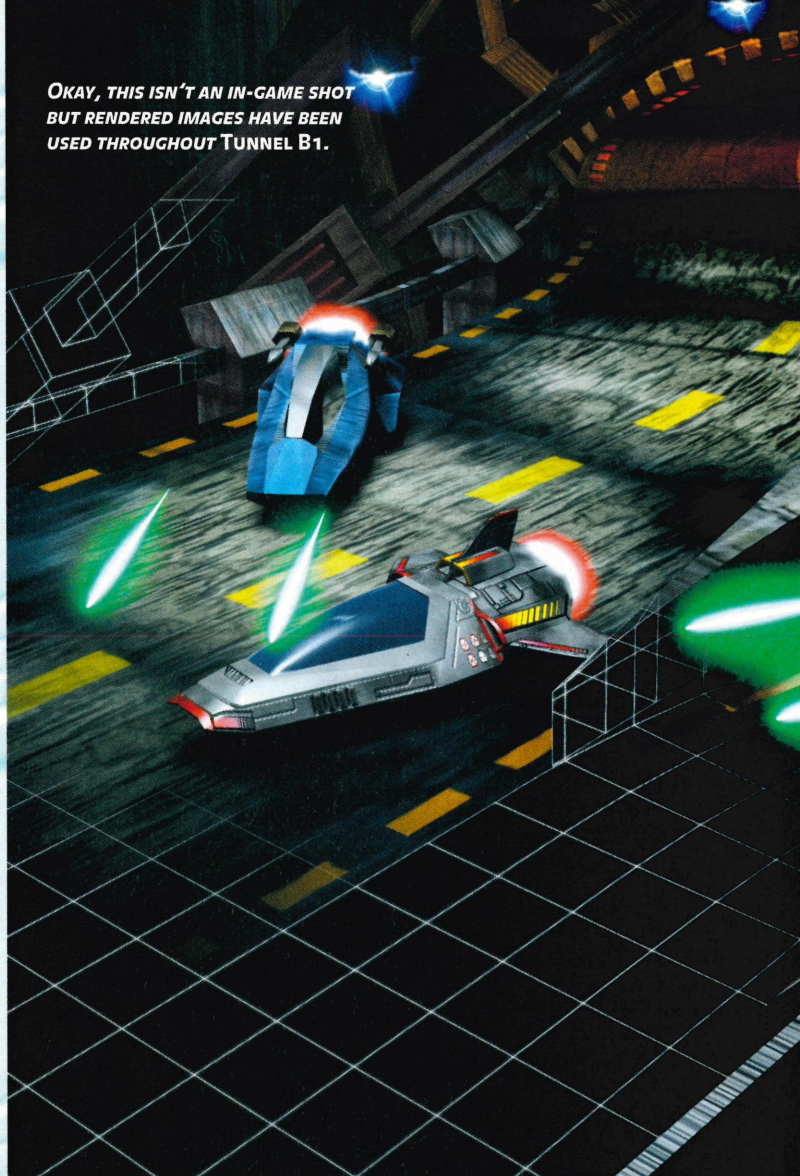
Those better projects soon morphed into the three games we have turned up to take an early peek at today. "It was in April 1994 that Neon really got going," continues Peter. "We met Ocean's Development Director, Gary Bracey, and proposed a few game ideas that he didn't like. We went away and tried to think of something that he would like. After a night of no sleep and lots of discussion we came up with the idea for a tunnel-based game."

Ocean gave Neon a four game contract, though that has now turned into five. There are no firm ideas as to what the final two games are going to be yet, but the contract runs for another four years and there is already talk of further extending the ties between the companies.

The first project Neon really went to work on was a role-playing game for the PC, initially called Game A, though it soon acquired the title *Vanishing Powers*. Neon had the foresight to start writing the program in the C language. (Game A? Language C? If it gets confusing, remember there are 30 letters in the German alphabet. Doesn't help, does it?) They knew that something written in C could be converted to the PlayStation and Saturn much quicker and easier than if written in assembler code. Indeed, the PlayStation version is proposed to be released around the same time as the PC version at the tail-end of this year.

"In November 1994, PlayStation development kits turned up in nice big boxes," reminisces Peter, pinpointing the event that kick-started Neon's second project, the tunnel-based project ingeniously christened Game B. Using a stylish 3D engine, Game B blended claustrophobic subterranean levels with more open airborne segments. Ocean recognised the seeds of two different games in there, so Game B was

OKAY, THIS ISN'T AN IN-GAME SHOT BUT RENDERED IMAGES HAVE BEEN USED THROUGHOUT TUNNEL B1.



VIPER

The screenshots accompanying this preview could not possibly do the game justice, even if there were dozens of them and they were all in ultra-high resolution. As it is, there's only a couple and they're very grainy (unfortunately, these are all Ocean is prepared to make available at the moment). Take it from someone who's had a go on it, *Viper* is probably going to be the most visually stunning game of 1996.

There's very little of an actual game in existence at the moment. Most of the development time to date has been concentrated on the graphics. All there is to see is one level of

Manhattan-style cityscape, viewed from overhead, one helicopter and four identical enemies. This is more than enough to get a feel for the game, and frankly it wouldn't matter if there wasn't any more to it. The graphics are so sharp they could have your eye out, the helicopter movement so smooth you want to powder it and put on its nappy, and the overhead view of the city flaunts such a realistic depth of field that anyone who suffers from vertigo could genuinely have a funny turn playing it.

Viper is an accurate portrayal of flying a helicopter through a city, not as it really is (no dirt-



split into two. The tunnel-based sections became *Tunnel B1* (the 'B1', a throwback to the use of letters as working titles, is likely to remain part of the game's name). The airborne sections, featuring *Thunderhawk*-style helicopter combat, became first *Hornet B2*, then *Viper B2*, then just plain *Viper*.

"We wanted to call it *Patriot*," says Ocean's Paul Tresise, "but the Neon boys pointed out that it's not a very good name for a game from Germany."

AN EXTRA DIMENSION

"Some companies we work with lead on the PC," continues Ocean's Paul, "some lead on the Saturn. Neon are leading on the PlayStation for two of their projects and it works well for them." *Tunnel B1* and *Viper* are, as a result of their origins as part of the same game, based on the same 3D engine. "I can't imagine there being a better engine than this on the PlayStation at the moment," says the engine's creator, Jan Joeckel, modestly.

"The programmers at Neon have different interests," opines Tunnel level designer Boris Triebel, "some of us want to take 2D to a new level, others are more interested in re-doing the idea of 3D games."

Peter interjects: "We just use 3D if we need it. It's not hard to find ideas that work in 2D. It's not a question of 2D or 3D, we

just use whatever works. The PlayStation is by far the best machine for 3D. The PC is not really suited to it at all. Despite what people think, 3D routines really slow it down. It would be much better to use 2D instead on the PC, otherwise it's just graphics and no gameplay."

What about the Saturn, Peter? "If we were to move away from 3D titles, we might write games on the Saturn first. It's much bigger than the PlayStation in Japan, and the two machines are suited to different styles of game. As for 3D on the Saturn, we have created our own PlayStation 3D libraries for use in Saturn conversions, but we're still having a lot of problems with polygons on the Sega machine."

VISITING THE LIBRARY

Although they have created their own 3D libraries for use on other formats, Neon are still reliant on Sony's 3D libraries for their programming. Sony have established libraries of 3D routines in place of allowing programmers direct access to the hardware to write their own routines. Does it work? Yes and no, according to Neon's PlayStation specialist, Anthony Christoulakis: "The Sony 3D libraries are useful. There's no problems, but yes, it would be better to be able to go straight to the hardware."

"As we used the libraries, anyone could do the things we've

done," admits Peter, "but some of the routines we've used are not very well documented, so not many other people have done things like that." There's plenty of evidence to back up any claim that Neon are doing things with the PlayStation that no-one else has managed yet, if not in 3D motion than in lighting effects. "It is the optical effects that really make *Tunnel B1* special," concedes Boris.

So could you have written Sony's library routines better than they did? A diplomatic silence falls over the group. "Maybe," says Anthony. "I know some people who have hooked into the hardware with assembler routines and made things run 10-15% faster. They tried to get approval for it from Sony, but they were turned down."

Well, everything has flaws, even Neon's own 3D game engine. "There are some tunnel effects," says its author Jan, "where there are openings and you can't see the other part of the track which should be there. To cover these up, we make a building appear or it suddenly goes dark or something. The engine is not God, it doesn't do everything."

The boys from Neon software, then. You'll probably be hearing an awful lot about them over coming months and years, but for the moment we leave them in their office – dreaming of an engine that is God – and head back to our hotel for cable television porn and mini-bar raiding!

covered windscreen, juddering seat, biting cold, painful noise or montage of ugly buildings) but as you always imagined it would be as an eight year-old watching *Airwolf* on Saturday afternoons. The lights on the buildings glisten, sparkle and glow like an acid casualty's bedside candle. As your chopper climbs, dives and turns, the perspective shifts with stomach-churning accuracy. Forget the enemies, forget the targets, you could sit here happily, just flying around aimlessly for hours on end. It's the ultimate post-club chill out, man.

Of course there is more to it than that, but even firing your weapons looks aesthetically lush – here's one pacifist easily won over by infrared explosions and beautiful smoke trails (created using loads of transparent polygons, apparently). Ocean and

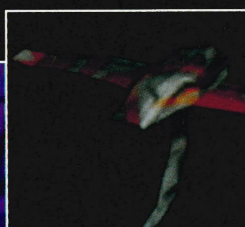
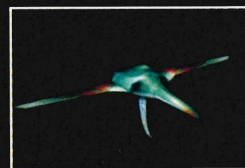
Neon are still deciding what to include in the game. Power-ups like a limited nitro boost? Civilian craft that you should try not to shoot? End of level guardians that you have to hit in a certain weakspot? Not exactly innovative stuff, but who needs innovative ideas when you've got 3D graphics and an engine like this?

BELIEVE THE HYPE?

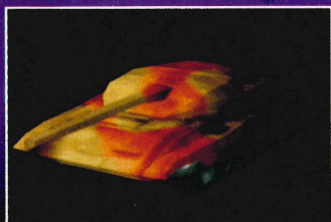
Okay, so we shouldn't be heaping undiluted praise on something so early in its development life that even the software house behind it admit "there isn't much to see yet", but early indications from several quarters, backed up by the product itself, suggests that *Viper* is the one to watch. You will certainly be hearing a lot about this game over the coming months – of all

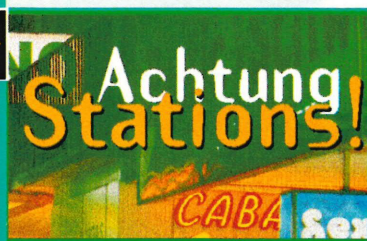
Neon's titles it's the one that will be whipping up the most turbulence. *Viper* already looks like being very special.

EVEN THIS EARLY IN ITS DEVELOPMENT, NEON'S VIPER LOOKS VERY COOL INDEED.



UNFORTUNATELY THESE SMALL GRAINY SCREENSHOTS DON'T DO VIPER JUSTICE. TAKE IT FROM US, THE FINAL GAME WILL LOOK CONSIDERABLY BETTER.





GERMANE TO GERMANY

Operating out of Germany as a video games developer is no picnic. One of the reasons Neon were quick to sign up with Ocean was their experience as individuals working for German companies.

According to Neon's Peter Thierolf: "Most German publishers aren't taking things that seriously. They don't have the international connections, especially not in the consoles market, and they are just in it for the money. They don't really look at the problems of the programmers, who need to get paid. We've all done work for people that we haven't been paid for. Ocean are different. They pay us!"

Though there is a large PC market, with almost every German home having a CD-ROM machine, consoles haven't made the same in-roads in Germany as they have in many other European nations. Another problem of operating out the land of beer and sausages could be the country's notorious attitude to the censorship of violent video games. *Doom*, for instance, is banned from sale in Germany. "There are ways round that," says Peter. "Though you can't advertise *Doom* for sale, adverts in magazines just say *Boom* or some such. Everyone knows what it is."

Aren't Neon worried about bringing out a game and finding it on sale everywhere but their own country? Peter again: "None of us has written games that have been banned yet, but in the future we may do a violent game that won't come out here. One thing we certainly won't do is any sort of game about Nazis." *Tunnel B1* designer Boris Triebel doesn't see censorship as a cause for worry at Neon. "We're not interested in doing violence just for the sake of it," he maintains, "we're far more interested in good gameplay."

A further difficulty associated with being a programmer in Germany is the country's policy of compulsory national service. Doesn't this interrupt your development as a programmer? Peter didn't feel affected by it: "We all started programming young, moving from the Commodore 64 up to the PC and

now consoles. I was the only person at Neon who was in the army. Everyone else did social service, working in hospitals."

Despite the difficulties of the local programming scene, Neon have no intention of following the example of fellow countrymen Factor Five, who recently upped sticks and moved to California as part of their agreement with LucasArts – a move which leaves Neon as the largest independent developer in Germany. "No, we aren't going to move to Manchester," says Peter. "We'll stay here. We like it here, we speak the language, our friends are here. I suppose that if we were going to move anywhere it would have to be somewhere hot, like Miami. But Ocean wouldn't be able to visit us then."

"Oh yes we would," blusters the man from Ocean. "I'll move over there with you."



NEON'S BRIGHT LIGHTS

Enjoying the midnight vibes in a Frankfurt Mexican restaurant, the Neon team out on the town (from left to right):

ANTHONY CHRISTOULAKIS
'Toon' has apparently worked in the entertainment business since the age of six – doing what?

JAN JOECKEL
Responsible for programmed *Tunnel B1*'s 3D engine.

MATTHIAS WIEDERWACH
Specialises in 3D tools and fast algorithms for the PlayStation.

MICHAEL BUETTNER - Programmed *Mr Nutz* on the Amiga. Now working on *Vanishing Powers*.

PAUL TRESISE
Works for Ocean, but as Producer of all Neon products, spends as much time in Germany as Manchester.

Stayed at home, poorly:
BORIS TRIEBEL
Responsible for level and game design on *Tunnel B1*.

Went home with his girlfriend:
PETER THIEROLF
Programmed several Amiga games (*Apidya*, *Turrican 3*). Now working on *Vanishing Powers*.



TUNNEL B1

In a telephone call prior to this trip, Ocean press bloke Declan described *Tunnel B1* to me as "a mixture of *Doom*, *Descent* and *Ridge Racer*." While all three of those games are famously top dollar, I was naturally reserving judgement on whether the triumvirate's offspring would inherit its parents' appeal. (Hey, I love curry and I love ice cream, but chicken korma flavoured Soft Scoop would struggle to make my shopping list.)

Such reservations prove misplaced. While *Tunnel B1* com-

bines several styles of game, the result isn't convoluted in any way and has a clear identity of its own. Any connection to *Ridge Racer* seems pretty minimal anyhow – with its gravity and inertia based motion, *Tunnel B1* isn't conducive to free-flowing racing. Even once you've mastered the controls, you have to stop to shoot things. Oh, and you don't race against anyone but the clock.

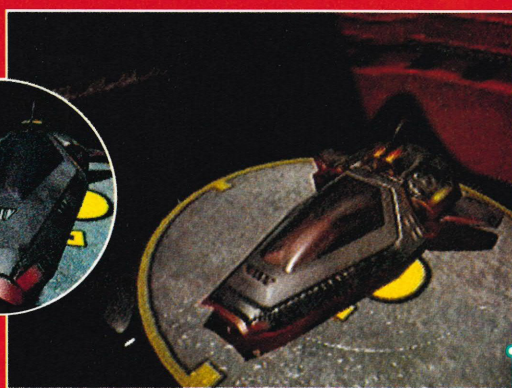
Links to *Doom* are also fairly sparse, restricted to the moody, dark atmosphere and light

sourcing, and the fact that you can switch between weapons. No, it's games like *Descent* and *Quarantine* that are *Tunnel B1*'s closest relatives, though Neon's game does away with any control over your height. Your craft stays on the deck, where it gets past any non-hostile objects by simply driving into them (they go flying in a very aesthetically pleasing manner).

The 3D graphics look stunning and the techno soundtrack is, as the young folk say, bangin'. Neon have big plans for graphics



ACTION-PACKED? TOO RIGHT FELLA!



DETAILED RENDERED CUTSCENES FEATURE THROUGHOUT.

and sound. Even at this early stage of development, some of the lighting effects in *Tunnel B1* are stunning. The sound effects, we are promised, will change depending on the environment, becoming more echoey when in larger rooms, etc.

Weapons include a machine gun, two lasers, flares and rockets. The buttons on top of the joypad are used to switch between weapons, lock and fire missiles. Enemies will demonstrate varying levels of artificial intelligence, from those that pursue you unflinchingly to those that chase you for a little while then give up, to those that stay at home eating pizza and watching *Match of the Day*.

The two things that most immediately struck me on playing this early version were the quality of the lighting effects (including some spectacular big explosions) and the trickiness of controlling the vehicle. It's one of those games where you'll initially zigzag between the tunnel walls, over-correcting from one collision into another. A demonstration from the programmer illustrates that it's possible to whizz around at speed, with only a little practice (and perhaps an inside knowledge of the code).

Tunnel B1 is the most close to completion of Neon's Play-Station-led products, so it's probably going to be the first of their games you'll find in the stores. Further information as and when we get it.



STAGE FRIGHT

There will be five stages in *Tunnel B1*, each split into several levels. Four of the stages are currently under construction, but there are no graphics yet for the final stage, the Chemical Factory.

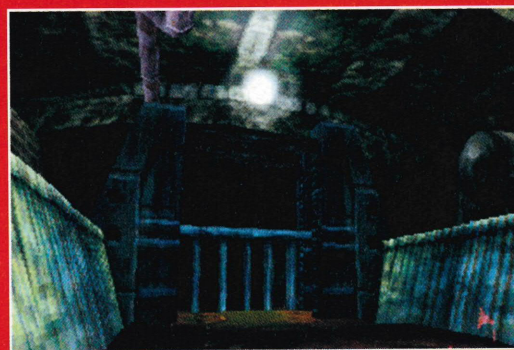
TUNNEL STAGE

The most complete stage in terms of current construction. Some levels are more racing-based, with tasks such as clearing the level within the time limit of a self-destruct sequence. Others focus more on the combat element, such as those where you have to destroy a number of generators spread throughout the complex.



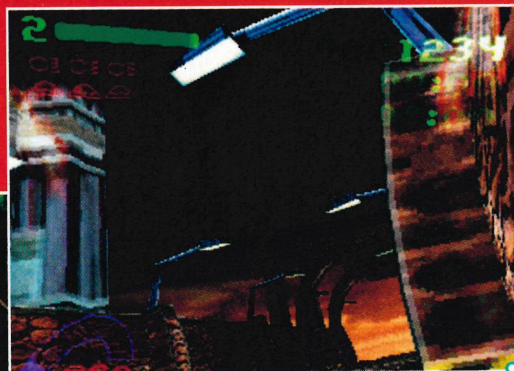
SEWER STAGE

This scenario is set in subdued lighting conditions. For 'subdued' read 'pitch black'. The only way to see where you're going is by firing your weapons. The way tiny sections of the screen are lit up by the individual rounds of your machine gun looks very impressive indeed.



INDUSTRIAL STAGE

At a very early stage of its construction, this stage will feature streetlights and lots of barbed wire fences. No truckers' cafe then?



TUNNEL B1 IS ONE OF THE GAMES DEVELOPED USING THE ADVANCED ENGINE THAT CAN SHIFT 3D ENVIRONMENTS WITH SPEED AND EASE.

CITY STAGE

Again, very early pics. This city is clearly run by my local council's highways department, if the holes in the road (which you can naturally fall through) are anything to go by.



BELIEVE THE HYPE?

Quite possibly. Though at a far more advanced stage of development, *Tunnel B1* isn't as

immediately goolie-grabbing as its sister game *Viper*. There are lots of games around on this 'flying round a science-fiction environment' tip and not all of them end up filed under Good (take *Quarantine*, for example). There's not enough of the game written yet to give us an indication of the amount of variety to the gameplay. If Neon include everything they say they want to, and the playability lives up to the challenge, then *Tunnel B1* will be brilliant. Time, as they say, will tell.



VANISHING POWERS

There's this goddess, right, and she's got these magical powers, only they're vanishing. So she seduces and tricks you into going and looking for them (perhaps she's offered to show you her bits or something). So anyway, you've got to go into this magical world where the powers have been hidden and sort of find them for her, once you've worked out what exactly 'powers' look like.

Arcade adventure scenarios are by and large a load of fourth form Tolkien bollocks, and the plot for *Vanishing Powers* is no exception. If she's a goddess, why doesn't she go and find the powers herself – she's bound to stand more chance than you, she's a bloody goddess. And secondly, how magical were these powers? They can't have been very magical if they didn't enable her to spot the bloke in the stripey shirt and face mask loading them onto the back of his truck. But I digress...

The most important thing to note about *Vanishing Powers* is that it is a very traditional RPG, and possibly the only one currently in the pipeline for the PlayStation. While there's dozens of the more arty and reflective adventure games on the way, those have traditionally been aimed at the more adult games market (most began life on the PC). Traditional swords-and-sorcery style RPGs have tended to sell to a younger, console based audience; these games have been the backbone of the Japanese Nintendo market, for example.

So is the PlayStation market more sophisticated than that? Will a 25 year-old gamesplayer buy a game where you walk round chatting to elves and goblins? Ocean realise they're stepping out into uncharted territory here. This is not the only untested genre Neon are producing PlayStation games for, and they have been making a point of asking around: "Will a PlayStation owner want to buy a game of this type?"

The answer is probably yes. Publishers had the same reservations about earlier systems like the SNES, but history has shown that while every new system starts out on a diet of arcade games, pretty soon the target market is so diverse that there will be some support for any type of game; heck, people even bought chess simulators for their Super Nintendos.

So what's *Vanishing Point* like? Unlike Neon's other

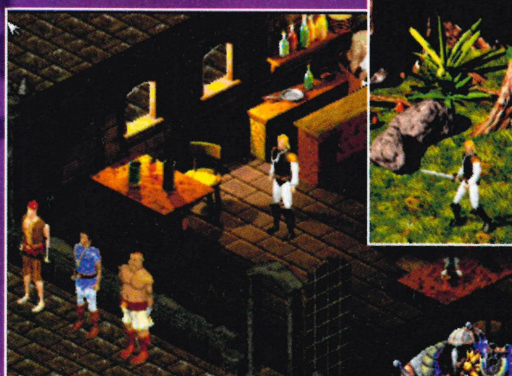
games, this is being produced on the PC first rather than the PlayStation. It looks pretty, there's lots of colourful characters and the game area will be suitably vast in size. The characters are rendered, with the local illustrator who designed the characters used as the motion capture subject. There are going on for ninety fully rendered characters. The PC version is due before Christmas and it is hoped that the PlayStation version will hit the shelves at the same time.

BELIEVE THE HYPE?

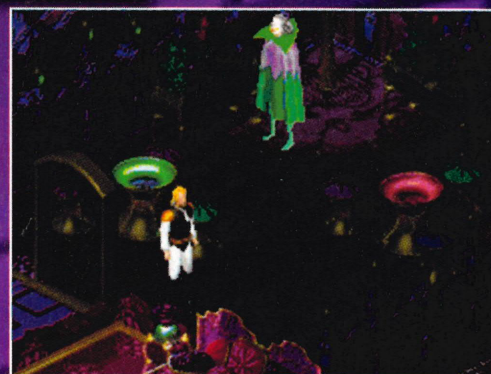
Adventure games are a tricky one to call. The visuals and interface are really of secondary importance to the plot development and the puzzles. It's all a question of logic, the right level of difficulty and an involving storyline, none of which we'll know until we've sat down for a full day with the finished game. Judgement reserved, then.



ONE OF VANISHING POINT'S MOST NOTABLE FEATURES ARE THE DETAILED HI-RES GRAPHICS.



VANISHING POINT PROMISES TO BE HUGE, WITH LOADS OF DETAILED LOCATIONS TO EXPLORE.



ISSUE 3 HAS ARRIVED

MAXIMUM



GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM
CONTINUES: MEMORY CARD
SKILL LEVELS: 1

RELEASE APRIL

PRICE £44.99

BY CORE

PLAYERS 1



hellshock is a by-the-book shoot 'em up. It's not innovative and it definitely isn't original, but it's

quite good fun nonetheless. *Shellshock* is, essentially, a revamped version of Atari's classic wire-frame shooter *Battlezone*. Graphical enhancements aside, the game is conceptually identical – drive around in a chunky tank, blowing the crap out of anything that... well, just about anything really.

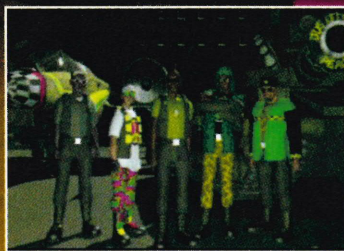
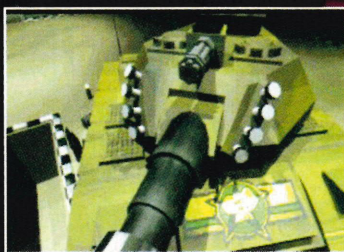
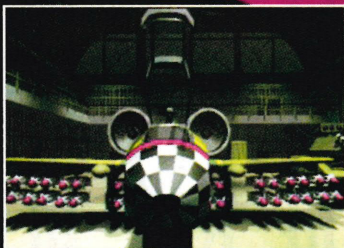
Actually there's a bit more to *Shellshock* than mindless destruction, but not that much more. The game is cram-packed with 25 levels, many of which are varied both in the objectives set (anything from simple rescue missions to night raids where the primary target is a key enemy installation) to the terrain on which the missions take place (although having said that, most of the landscapes do seem unnaturally flat. Even more varied is the opposing army; a diverse collection of tanks, armoured cars and helicopters. So, there's an assortment of cannon fodder to use as target practice.

Best of all, though, are all the weapons that can be strapped to the tank. Fed up with a pathetic pea-shooter? Lock and load the rapid-firing chain gun. The puny turret gun not powerful enough? Fire off a shell from the main cannon. Whatever weapon you choose, *Shellshock's* got explosions by the bucket load.

It's just a shame the action isn't matched by the game's soundtrack – naff hip-hop break beats, anyone?

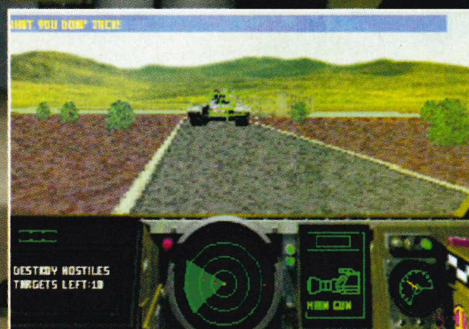
JUST KEEPIN' DA PEACE

Da Wardenz are a crack group of anti-terrorist soldiers hell-bent on cleaning out the bad seeds of the Big Apple. As *Shellshock* opens, Da Wardenz prepare for battle...

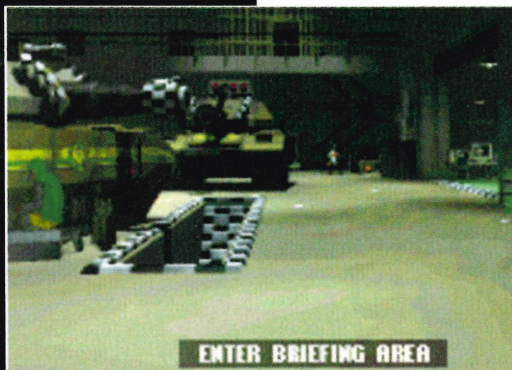


HAS IT GOT ELECTRIC WINDOWS?

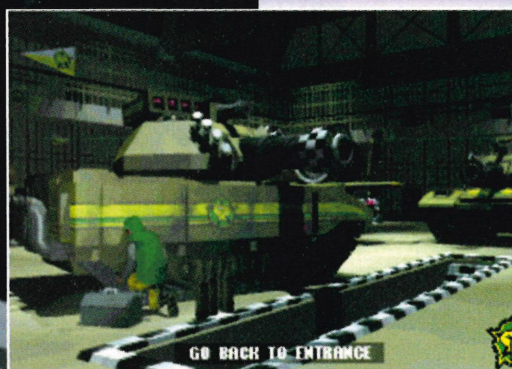
The M-13 Predator is a difficult beast to tame, and learning to throw this 15-ton tank round tight bends takes some time to master. The left and right tracks can be operated independently from one another so the Predator can turn on the spot and, with a little practice, it possible to skid around corners without losing any speed. Take care though, as the turret turns separately from the chassis so it's all too easy to splash into a river while targeting an enemy behind you.



HOME SWEET HOME

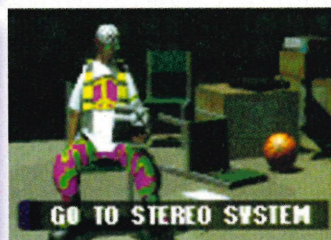


ENTER BRIEFING AREA



GO BACK TO ENTRANCE

Da Wardenz HQ (nicknamed The Pen) is divided into four areas. Walk across to the tank and D-Tour will be making essential repairs, while 9-1-1 is hanging out by the training simulator chamber. Props is always in the workshop checking over supplies, while Dogg-Tag is waiting in the briefing room with details of the next mission. The game can also be saved to memory card from the briefing room.

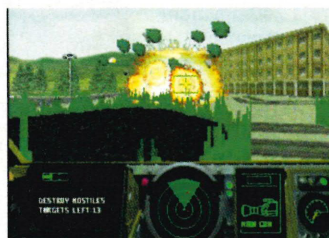


GO TO STEREO SYSTEM

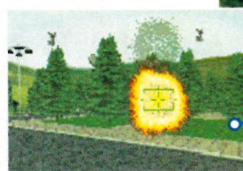
THE PEN IS THE DA WARDENZ HEAD-QUARTERS. INSIDE YOU'LL FIND THE M-13 PREDATOR AND THE A-10 TANK BUSTER, AS WELL AS ALL YOUR BATTLE BUDDIES.

SHOOT EVERYTHING!

One of the most enjoyable aspects of *Shellshock* is the ability to destroy just about everything. Lampposts, trees, huts, walls... hell, you can even nuke entire buildings if you fire off enough shells! but what's the point of all this wanton destruction? Apart from being a laugh occasionally a supply crate is left in the rubble, which can be traded in with Props for extra bonuses for the tank.



SEARCH THROUGH THE RUBBLE TO FIND VALUABLE SUPPLY CRATES.



HELLO, GREENPEACE? ANOTHER TREE BITES THE DUST.

PLAY THAT FUNKY MUSIC

In a bid to out-cool *WipeOut*'s techno tunes, *Shellshock*'s explosive gameplay is set against funky hip-hop beats and doggy gangsta raps.

Although pretty cool at first, the soundtrack ultimately fails to capture the 'attitude' of the game and the repetitive break-beats soon begins to grate. Demand for the vinyl 12-inch remix will be minimal, then.



UP THE ARSENAL

The M-13 Predator is designed to handle any combat scenario, from engaging heavily defended enemy installations to taking out helicopters flying overhead. As such the Predator is equipped with three upgradeable weapon systems.

240mm M257 Main Cannon

This baby is the Predator's primary weapon and is effective against virtually any ground threat. Although slow to reload, the cannon is blessed with an infinite ammo supply to you don't have to worry about running out of shells.



60mm M231 Chain Gun

The auto-aiming chain gun is effective against air and ground targets, although it's not as destructive as the main cannon. As the machine is rapid-firing it's prone to overheating, and so can only fire in short bursts before jamming.



Milipps Systems 'Rattler' Surface-to-air Missile

SAMs are extremely expensive and must therefore be used carefully. The Predator can mount up to four of the missiles, which are most effective against helicopter gunships, which they automatically track providing you've acquired a lock beforehand.



HAPPY SHOPPER

Collect enough supply crates and Props will modify the Predator with the many upgrades available. Here's a few items available for the happy shopper.

Armour Repair

Cheap at \$2000, you'll need armour repair to patch up any battle damage.



Extra Armour

Increase the Predator's resistance to incoming fire by bolting on thicker armour.



SAM

Surface-to-air missile. Excellent against helicopter attacks but pretty expensive.



Reload Mechanism

Strap one of the these to the main cannon and it will reload much faster.



Targeting Computer

Used for the chain gun and SAM missiles. Speeds up the process of acquiring a lock-on.



ENEMIES

In 1997 terrorists are no longer trigger-happy thugs wielding AK-47s. These blokes have tanks! And gun turrets! And helicopters! Here's the low-down on some of the enemy units, along with the best strategy to adopt when engaging them.

BATTLE TANK

This is slow but packs a powerful punch. Thankfully the range of the Predator's 240mm main gun is greater, so keep you're distance and pepper the bastis in a shower of cannon fire.



ARMoured PERSONNEL CARRIER

Even though they're fairly fast and manoeuvrable, APCs shouldn't cause too much of a problem as a Vulcan machine gun is the only weapon they carry. Again, switch to the main gun and let rip.



GUN BOAT

These huge gun boats are moored in the shallow waters surrounding the enemy HQ, strafing the shoreline with hefty chain guns. Blow a hole in their hull using either the chain gun or main cannon.



HELICOPTER GUNSHIP

This beast is one of the biggest threats you'll face during your life in Da Wardenz. Keep moving to avoid its missile fire, using the Rattler surface-to-air missiles to blow the chopper out of the sky.



COMMENT

STEVE

I used to really love Atari's

Battlezone coin-op, and I thought *Shellshock* would be the same sort of thing, but with more depth to the missions. While the missions do vary, however, they still couldn't exactly be called deep, and trundling around destroying object after object isn't the best way to draw a player in. That said, the immediacy of the action works very well, and initially blowing things up proves highly entertaining. But after a while, as the repetitive nature grows apparent, other little niggles become noticeable. Despite the 3D, for example, knocking down a wall reveals it to be paper thin. Similarly, the music — while a novelty at first — soon becomes intrusive. A nice idea, but let down by its execution.

Engine Upgrade

Gradually increases the tank's top speed, acceleration and even manoeuvrability.



Tracks Upgrade

Not a particularly useful upgrade, really. Increases the tank's traction. Ooh.



Air Support

\$15,000! Expensive, yes, but can wipe out an entire battalion of enemy tanks in one fell swoop.



HANGIN' WITH DA BOYZ

Da Wardenz are a team of five mercenary soldiers committed to fighting terrorism in the Big Apple. These guys are no Guardian Angels though, preferring to deal out justice from inside an M-13 Predator tank rather than using harsh language. Inside *The Pen*, you can talk to each of your colleagues who, from left to right, are:

EARSHOT

AKA Darnell Jones
Sergeant

The smart bloke in Da Wardenz, Earshot is the communications officers and therefore handles all radio messages transmitted during the game. He is also an expert tactician so when he gives hints before each sortie, listen up!

9-1-1

AKA Charles Valdez
Lieutenant

If you're in trouble, call 9-1-1 for air support. Valdez is a skilled pilot who flies both the A-10 tank buster and Chinook rescue helicopter. This bloke's services don't come cheap though.

DOGG-TAG

AKA Mike Reynolds
Captain

The leader of Da Wardenz. Aside from keeping the unit in order, Dogg-Tag will brief you on each mission, and will also detail any resistance you'll encounter, along with primary objectives.

D-TOUR

AKA Cecil Coles
Private First-Class

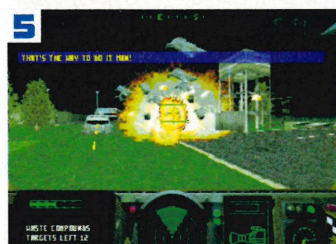
D-Tour is the team mechanic. He apparently prefers the company of the Predator tank over his battle-scarred human buddies. He'll escort you on each mission, offering important and helpful advice as the battle progresses.

PROPS

AKA Alvin Fielder
Corporal

You'll find Props hiding away in the workshop, making sure Da Wardenz supply store is stocked up to the max. Providing you've got the cash, Props can get you anything you want – even a pair of the latest Nike Hi-Tops!

MISSION 5: NIGHT RAID



By the fifth mission, things are starting to hot up. Under the cover of darkness Da Wardenz plan their next attack...

1: Before the mission begins, Dogg-Tag details any threats in the surrounding area.

2: Let's rock! Trundling towards the outpost by the perimeter fence, a gun turret and enemy battle tank open fire.

3: Having just made it through the initial onslaught, a load of armoured personnel carriers, packed with troops, appear on the horizon. Eek!

4: There it is. You've survived this long, now get inside the waste compound and nuke the buildings.

5: Uh oh, the enemy tanks knew you were coming. Pah, who cares. Fancy a bite of my mighty cannon, terrorist bast?



6: At last, the area has been cleared of all enemy resistance. Now locate and destroy the waste compound buildings.

7: Success! All objectives have been completed, now all that's left to do is break through the enemy lines and back into friendly territory.

Chain Gun Coolant

Reduces the chance of the chain gun overheating, allowing it to fire faster.



COMMENT

ALEX

Due to the nature of *Shellshock*,

it's extremely easy to get into – anyone can drive around in a tank, shooting things. But although you can pick up and play immediately, the game is initially unrewarding. The first handful of missions are all simple 'destroy everything' affairs, and are therefore uninspiring and downright tedious. It's not until later that things start to become interesting, with the introduction of night raids and rescue missions adding much needed variety. The initial lack of excitement isn't aided by the game's presentation either. Objects lack detail and definition, the scenery is sparse and the 3D environment just isn't convincing – since when has the ground been totally flat? But, for all its shortcomings, *Shellshock* is still quite good fun. Why? Because it's a no-nonsense blaster that allows you to shoot everything – smart! Perhaps a few hours of mindless destruction doesn't really warrant forking out £45, but *Shellshock* does offer a hefty challenge to anyone who's willing to persevere through the first few mind-numbing levels.

RATING

GRAPHICS 72

ANIMATION 77

SOUND FX 78

MUSIC 80

LASTABILITY 78

PLAYABILITY 79

OVERALL



NBA IN THE ZONE

GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: EASY
CONTINUES: SAVE FACILITY
SKILL LEVELS: 5

RELEASE MARCH
PRICE TBA
BY KONAMI
PLAYERS 1-2

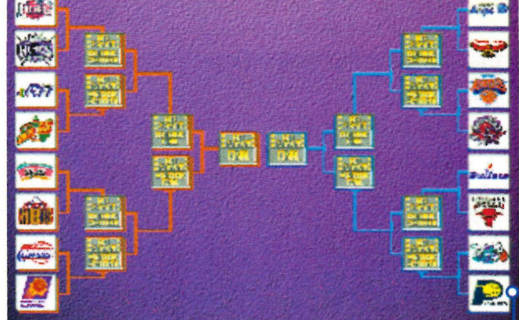


ore basketball, eh? Well don't say we didn't warn you. Sony's *Total NBA* proved

the point that an accurate computer sport simulation is only worth doing if the game itself is fun to play, and while I've no doubt that running around with a bunch of extremely tall blokes is lots of fun, considering it didn't take me very long to tire of *Total NBA*, I hoped Konami had something special up their sleeve. And, thankfully, they do!

Yes, while Acclaim spiced up an otherwise dull game with inclusions such as flaming balls power-ups, and point bonuses, Konami has aimed for the smoothest, most flowing gameplay possible. The graphics aren't as shiny as Sony's offering, but they move between animations in a more realistic way. Option-wise, there are all the exhibition matches, tournaments and playoffs that you could want, as well as tons of teams to choose from.

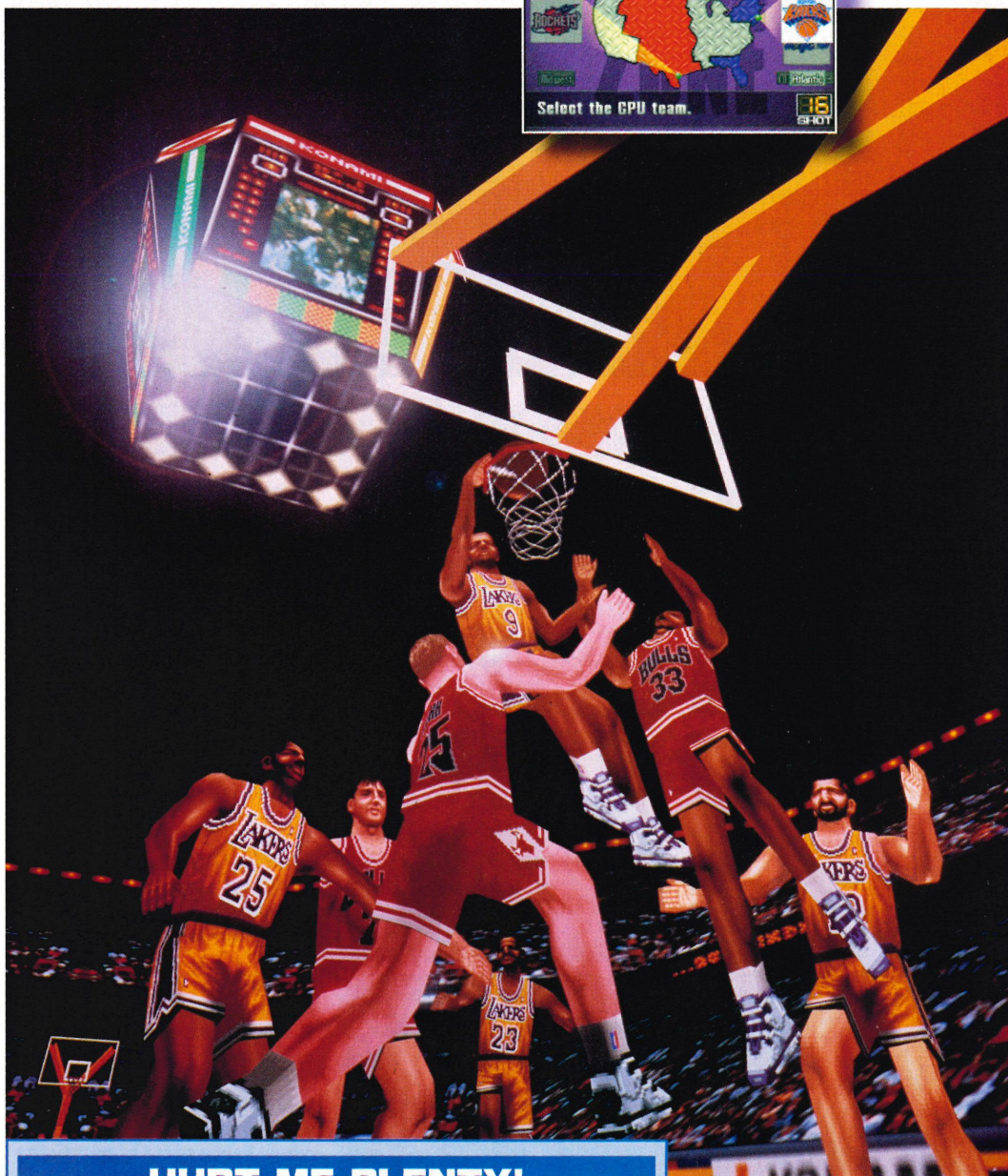
The controls are well chosen, with instinctive attacking and defending moves, all of which are easy to execute. Though there are only three views to choose from, it's never really a problem and they're actually quite intelligent; zooming in and out to help the player keep an eye on all the important action. But as I said previously, all these positive comments are only worth something if you still want to play the game after your first hour. And that's where things can get tricky...



IF YOU WANT TO GO FROM THE QUALIFYING ROUNDS TO THE FINAL OR THE TOURNAMENTS, YOU'LL WANT TO FOLLOW YOUR PROGRESS VIA THIS HANDY MAP.



WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO TODAY?



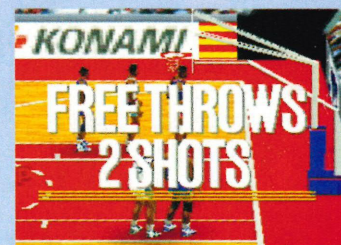
HURT ME PLENTY!



The guy in white, from the Houston Rockets, goes for a lovely plant...



But he's brought down at the last minute with a nasty challenge from behind!



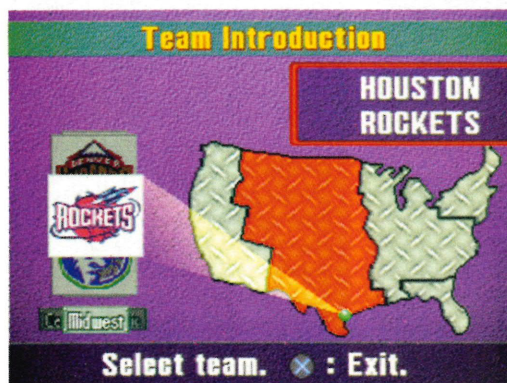
Luckily for me, the ref saw everything and has awarded two free shots.

COURT WITH DANGER

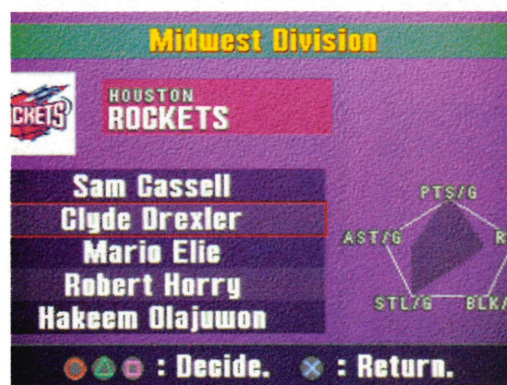
Each team has not only a detailed and distinctive kit, but also a home court with different designs. Very nice they are, too.



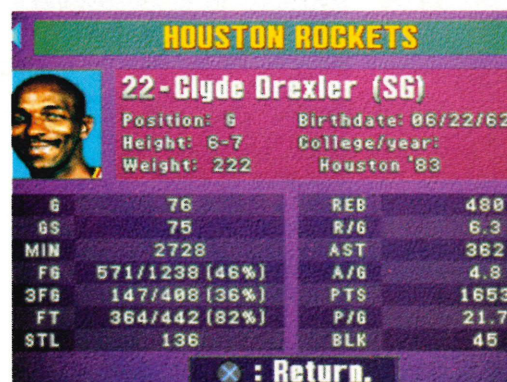
CAPTAIN, MY CAPTAIN



There are literally 'lots' of teams to pick from here and, should you be into basketball, you'll be hard pushed to think of a team that isn't included.



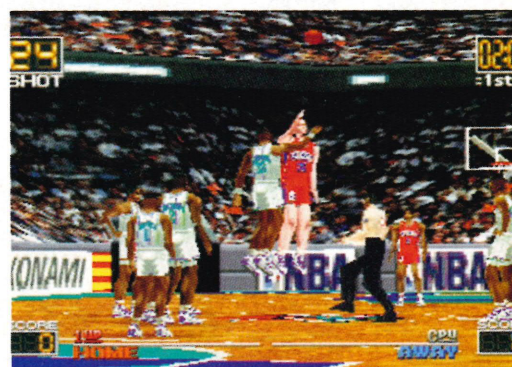
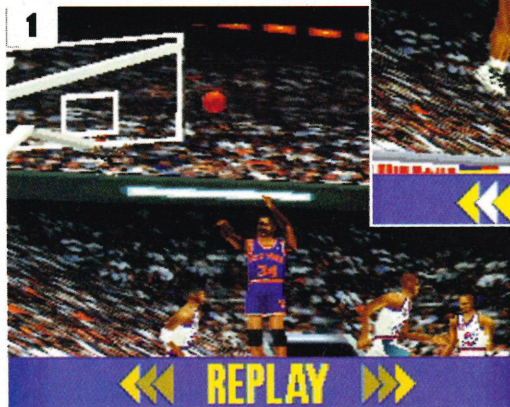
You can also examine the formation of each team and its coverage...



...as well as look at each individual player's statistic and performance history.

BLOCKING HELL!

Blocking shots is a matter of timing. Don't jump too early or you'll miss all the fun, but get it right and you can annoy your opponent by bugging up their shot at the last minute. Tres satisfying!



AS IS TRADITIONAL IN BASKETBALL, EACH MATCH STARTS WITH THE REF LOBBING THE BALL AND THEN RUNNING AWAY BEFORE HE GETS FLATTENED BY ENORMOUS MEN.



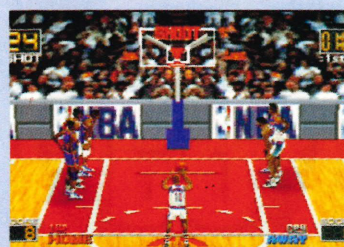
THOUGH THE DRAMATIC CAMERA SHOTS WOULDN'T BE PRACTICAL FOR PLAYING, THEY MAKE FOR SOME EXCELLENT REPLAYS.

COMMENT

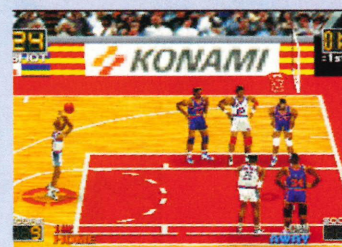
STEVE

Even with the hype surrounding

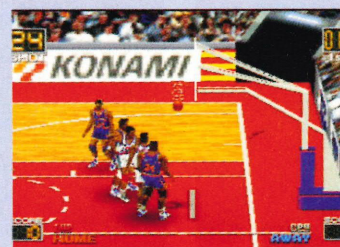
Sony's *Total NBA*, I still find myself preferring the technically inferior Konami game. While the Sony game is far more realistic, it proves dull after long-term play, and *NBA In The Zone* combats this with, in my mind, a better control system – the ability to turn away from players being particularly well implemented. Granted PlayStation snobs are going to bemoan the lack of reflections and viewpoints, but the *NBA In The Zone* sprites are large and fairly well realised, and the action fast enough for would-be NBA stars. Even if we slightly prefer *NBA In The Zone* to *Total NBA*, though, once again it suffers from the lack of lasting appeal that slights the genre. No amount of passing and fancy dunking saves this, and again another dunking game gets stuck in the middleground.



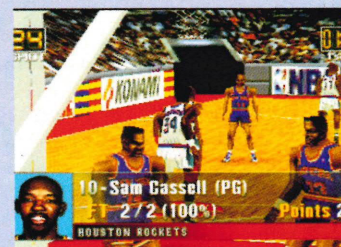
A simple reaction test. The arrow moves left and right, you just hit the button at the right moment.



All the opposition can do is stand, wait and watch as the seconds tick by...



...but unfortunately for them, they don't even get a rebound as it goes straight down.



And so Houston Rockets' Sam Cassell celebrates a 100% success sheet. Good work, fella!



POINTS OF VIEW

There are three different views available in *NBA In The Zone*; a side-view, a sort of isometric-view, and an end-view (just like Konami's *Give 'n' Go* title).



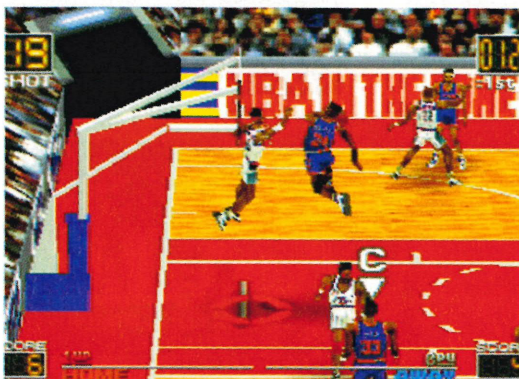
Because the view follows you as you travel up the court, the end camera gives an excellent view as you attack the far basket...



Unfortunately, when the action moves towards the near basket, things can get a bit cluttered. Still, at least you have a choice.



A better way to play the game (no matter which team you're on) is via the simple side view. Ah yes, this is much clearer.



The side view also zooms in when you get near the baskets, offering a more exciting, telly-like coverage. Clever stuff.

THE SCORES ON THE DOORS

After each quarter you can examine the statistics generated by the match so far. Here you can compare each individual player's performances against their opposite numbers.

This screen allows you to compare the entire teams' scoring, as well as seeing exactly where the points came from (eg re-bounds, three-pointers, etc.)

And the final screen of statistics shows both teams' members side by side. As you can see, the Rockets have got the New York Knicks well and truly on the run.

POSITION COMPARISON

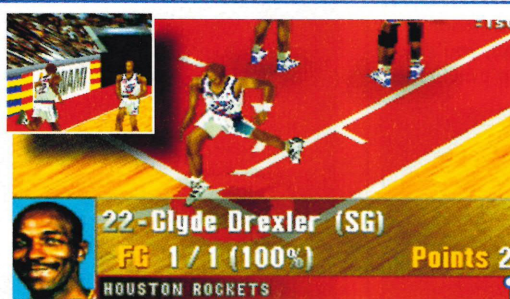
Player	Points	Reb	Ass	Stl	Blk	3Pt	2Pt	FT
G. Drexler	22	4	1	1	0	0	10	10
J. Starks	14	0	0	0	0	0	10	10

TEAM RESULT COMPARISON

Team	FG	FT	3Pt	Reb	Ass	Stl	Blk
ROCKETS	8/12	2/2	0/0	14	2	1	0
KNICKS	4/7	0/0	0/0	0	0	0	0

POINTS COMPARISON

Player	Points
G. Drexler	22
R. Horry	4
N. Olajuwon	4
V. Cazzell	2
Team Total	32
J. Starks	14
Team Total	14



AFTER EACH BASKET, THE PLAYER IN QUESTION CELEBRATES IN HIS OWN SPECIAL WAY, WHILE YOU GET TO CHECK OUT HIS STATISTICS.



Easily my favourite option, the isometric view gives the best of both worlds — with the clarity of the side view, and a bit of depth thrown in for free.



As with the side view, the camera zooms in for each basket attack, making the action easier to see and the 'feel' more dramatic.

COMMENT

MATT

NBA In The Zone looks and feels

fabulous. There's no doubt that this beats *Total NBA*, simply because the animations flow together in a much more realistic fashion. I must, however, say that I was a bit disappointed to find that on the default 'normal' skill level, I managed to go right through a five match tournament and win on my first go. It's not that I wanted to be thrashed senseless, it's just that I seemed to find the 'tricks of the game' quite quickly. Double tapping a direction gives you a burst of speed, and doing this before tackling seems to get the CPU every time. Still, that does not count as far as playing two-player games go, and that's where the game scores most points. The choice of teams should keep everyone happy, and the level of detail on teams and individuals is very impressive indeed. The only downer at the end of the day, is how long you'll want to keep playing once you've learnt all the tricks and seen all the moves. This leads me to say that I think *NBA In The Zone* is probably more valuable as a two-player game.

RATING

GRAPHICS	91
ANIMATION	92
SOUND FX	83
MUSIC	83
LASTABILITY	80
PLAYABILITY	85
OVERALL	85

85



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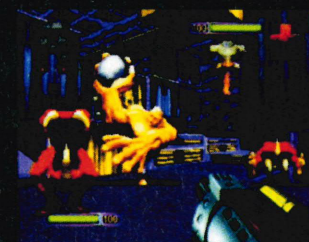
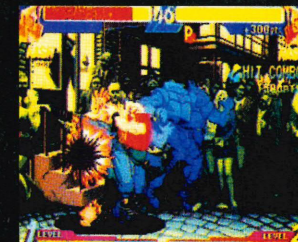
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GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
CONTINUES: N/A
SKILL LEVELS: 1

RELEASE MARCH

PRICE £44.95

BY SIE

PLAYERS 1



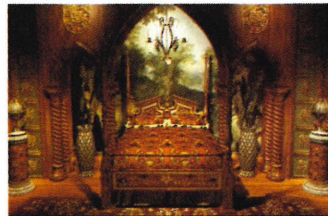
Myst is a bit promiscuous for a video game. It has 'enjoyed' many a format in its time, only now seeking to foist its charms on the PlayStation. But with it you're buying a bit of game history. *Myst* is the archetypal CD-ROM game. When it first appeared three years ago, initially on Apple Macintosh, then PC CD-ROM, the computer CD format was relatively untested, the user base limited. CD offered a mind-boggling storage capacity for beautiful rendered images and CD-quality sound, and *Myst* offered an arresting and creative use for them: an adventure whose roots are closer to written fiction than realtime gaming. Unsurprisingly, it was a huge success amongst computer users, and this has both enriched the creators, Cyan, and fuelled console conversions, which, more surprisingly, have enjoyed similar success.

Myst is not a new game. Its limited interaction, moderate size and technical limitations in the face of more sophisticated games that it has obviously inspired (Warp's *D* being the most prominent) make you aware of the four years that have passed since its first incarnation. But it's still as beautiful as ever.

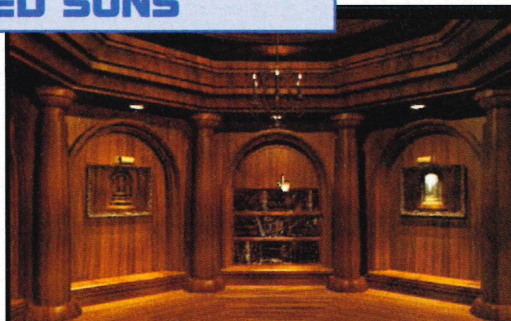
MY WICKED SONS

There is a library on Myst Island. Someone has taken the trouble to burn most of the books in this library, although a few precious fragments remain. These make amusing, though, mystifying reading. The author is clearly a sensitive, intelligent individual. His affection is split between a selection of worlds he develops and protects, and his family. He has a wife, Catherine, and two sons, Sirius and Achenar. Clearly either a Guardian reader nor Paula Yates.

Funnily enough, there are two books, one red the other blue, which are quite distinct from the others in the library. And in place of words, they offer a more curious and unsettling spectacle. In each is the image of a man, albeit obscured and distant and in some distress. Each seems to desire your help, and the resonances with the two sons of the books seem relevant. How have they come to this?



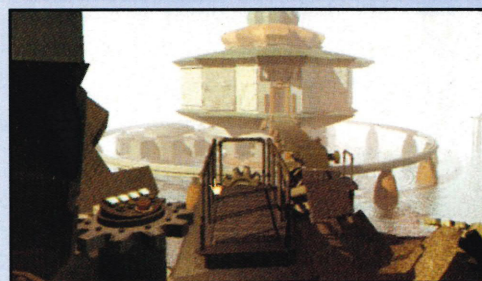
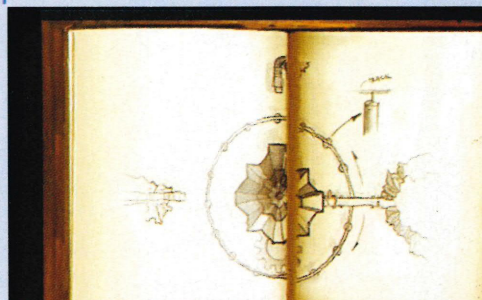
Myst



MECHANICAL AGE

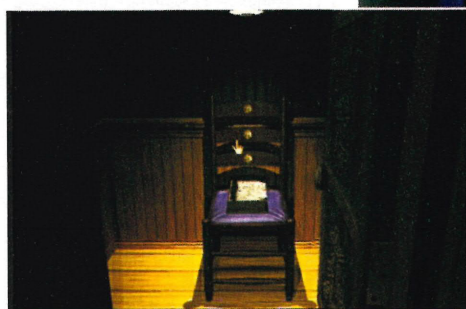
"We have been building on the old city's ruins, which will provide a perfect foundation for our fortress."

A very ingenious clockwork mechanism exists here. This links a formidable steel building to a series of tiny outcrops and deep inside this, two dramatically different styles of interior decoration sit together in a decidedly uneasy juxtaposition.



I HAVE HIDDEN THE LINKING BOOKS...

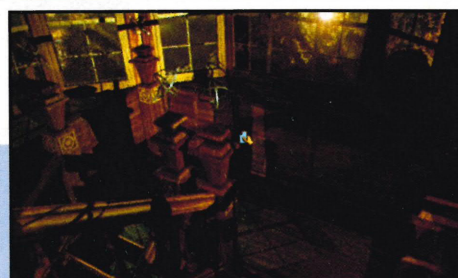
There are other books on Myst, which haven't been checked back into the library. They are not, in any case, for reading. They are for moving. They are not just lying around either. They've been hidden. That's if you believe the holographic message left in a half-hidden vault near the dock. Despite the fact he neglects to reveal the hiding places, the mysterious man he gives you a single clue: tower rotation. "Even if you forget the whereabouts of the Myst linking books, use the tower rotation to reveal their location". There is a tower near the library. It rotates. Someone has taken considerable trouble to etch cryptic messages on the walls.



COMMENT

ALEX

Myst is an odd game to categorise. It's graphic adventure, but one that's more akin to *D* than an action-based quest. In fact, *Myst* lacks action of any kind really, and is almost like reading a book and solving the puzzles rather than playing a game. It's a thinking man's adventure, and one that is full of intriguing plot twists and clever puzzles. As a result though, *Myst* is pretty difficult to get into – at first there are very few clues as to what the hell is going on, but exploring the island uncovers the first few puzzles and the game progresses from there. Therefore, if you can stand the initial confusion of wandering aimlessly around, gazing at the albeit gorgeous static screens, then *Myst* will capture the imagination for hours. If, like me, you want more from an adventure than the occasional puzzles strung together by rendered graphics, then I suggest you try *Discworld* or maybe even *Alone in the Dark* – they're by no means brilliant games, but at least they offer a little excitement.



THE STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL

How these 'other places' relate to Myst Island in place and time is a mystery itself. It is sufficient to know that you have access to them, and should take time to explore them.

CHANNELWOOD

"Though it is exactly as I'd imagined it, it is still amazing to see it with my own eyes. Water covers this age as far as I can see."

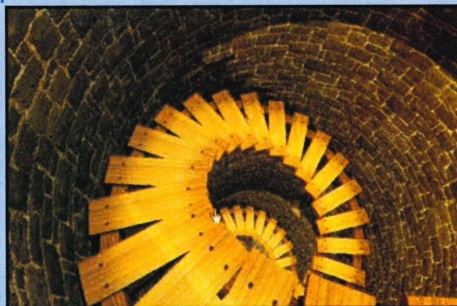
A relaxing, foggy, place where trees seem rooted in a murky lagoon. The ground level is covered by a network of wooden gantries and pipes, but the greater interest lies in an abandoned community built into the trees.



STONESHIP AGE

"I attempted to create a boat by writing it into the book. Somehow the boat became gripped by the rock and broken in half."

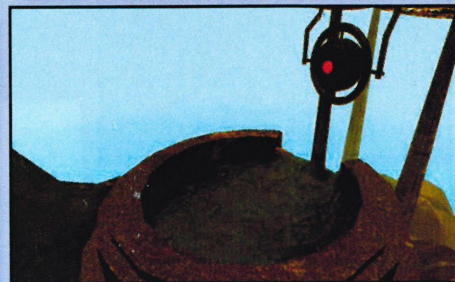
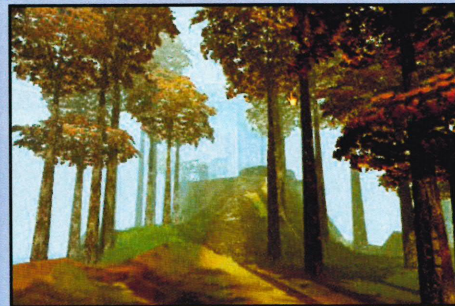
Some catastrophe occurred in the past, but the natives have built around it. They have electricity – used to light the way to the centre of the rock. Several curios of technology display the theme: things may not be what they seem, or else prone to change.

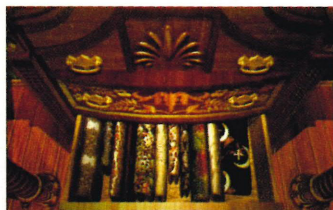


SELENITIC AGE

"This world offers much to the ears. Sounds constantly flows through my ears and I have found where a few of them originate."

Once beautiful, now barren, but filled with sound. The frequencies of the many noises, natural and manufactured, are used to create a key for a final underground mystery. Once again, it is sound which helps to form the solution.





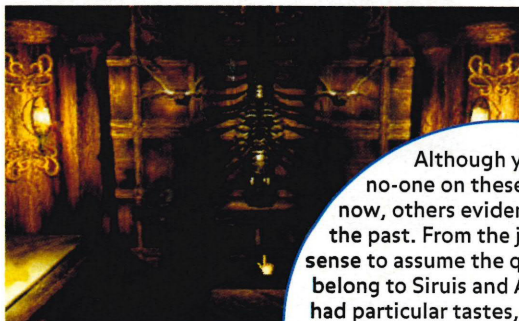
DESERTED ISLAND

Myst is an utterly deserted place, the largest single place you visit, that holds most of the clues and all of the doorways. Doorways? Sorry, I have to be elliptical. Doorways will be discussed later. There are no people within Myst. No living things, and hence no danger to yourself (although there is a distinct sense of menace). You don't have to be Indiana Jones. In fact, you could be Bill Gates. In fact, being Bill Gates would be a distinct advantage as all you're expected to use is your head. First you are expected to work out what the Hell is going on, then find the doorways that open up a wider world. But you always return to Myst.

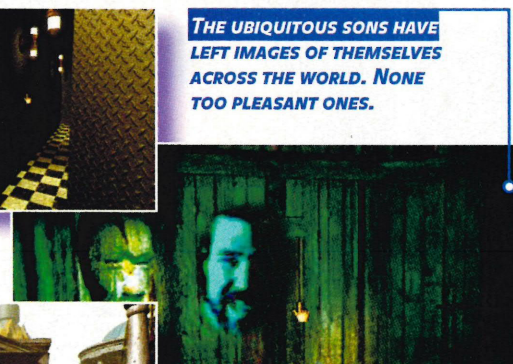
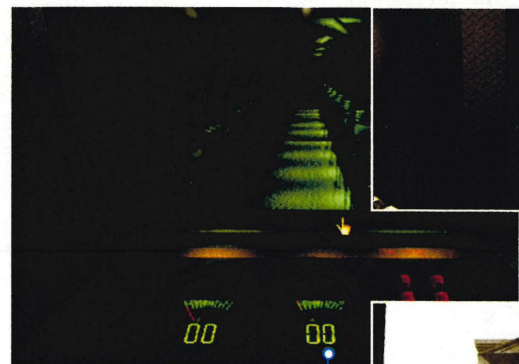
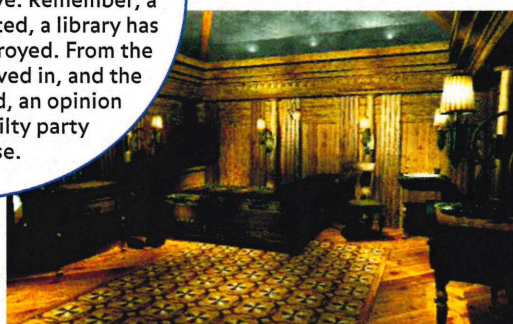
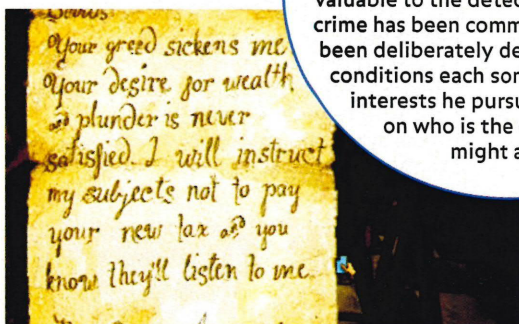
MYST ALWAYS GIVES THE IMPRESSION THAT SOMETHING BAD IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU.



ANGELS AND DEVILS

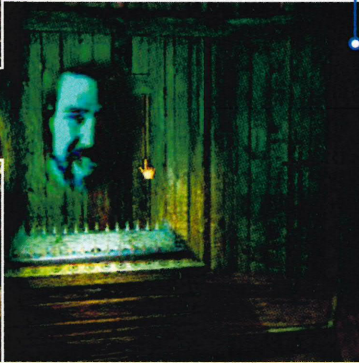


Although you meet no-one on these Myst worlds now, others evidently lived here in the past. From the journals, it makes sense to assume the quarters you inspect belong to Siruis and Achenar. They each had particular tastes, which might prove valuable to the detective. Remember, a crime has been committed, a library has been deliberately destroyed. From the conditions each son lived in, and the interests he pursued, an opinion on who is the guilty party might arise.



THE UBIQUITOUS SONS HAVE LEFT IMAGES OF THEMSELVES ACROSS THE WORLD. NONE TOO PLEASANT ONES.

SEVERAL OF MYST'S MANY CONUNDRUMS INVOLVES SETTING A SERIES OF DIALS PRECISELY.



COMMENT

STEVE

Myst is a game that continues to

attract devotees with each successive format release. For anyone interested in mystery or mythological fiction, it can be genuinely exciting to play a game that comes closer than any other to recreating a book atmosphere. For some, *Myst* is even their favourite game. But at least an equal number loathe and detest it, as *Myst* is extremely limited in its interaction. Pressing buttons and moving levers is the limit of what your hands are expected to do. Your brain, however, is put through its paces. It also lacks the sophistication of *D*, where the actions are animated. *Myst*, by contrast, consists almost entirely of static scenes with the very occasional smudge of animated action going on.

There are no shocks on these islands, but a genuine sense of menace developed in your own mind as you sketch the characters of Siruis, Achenar and their absent father in your own mind. The game's intriguing denouement doesn't let you down, either.

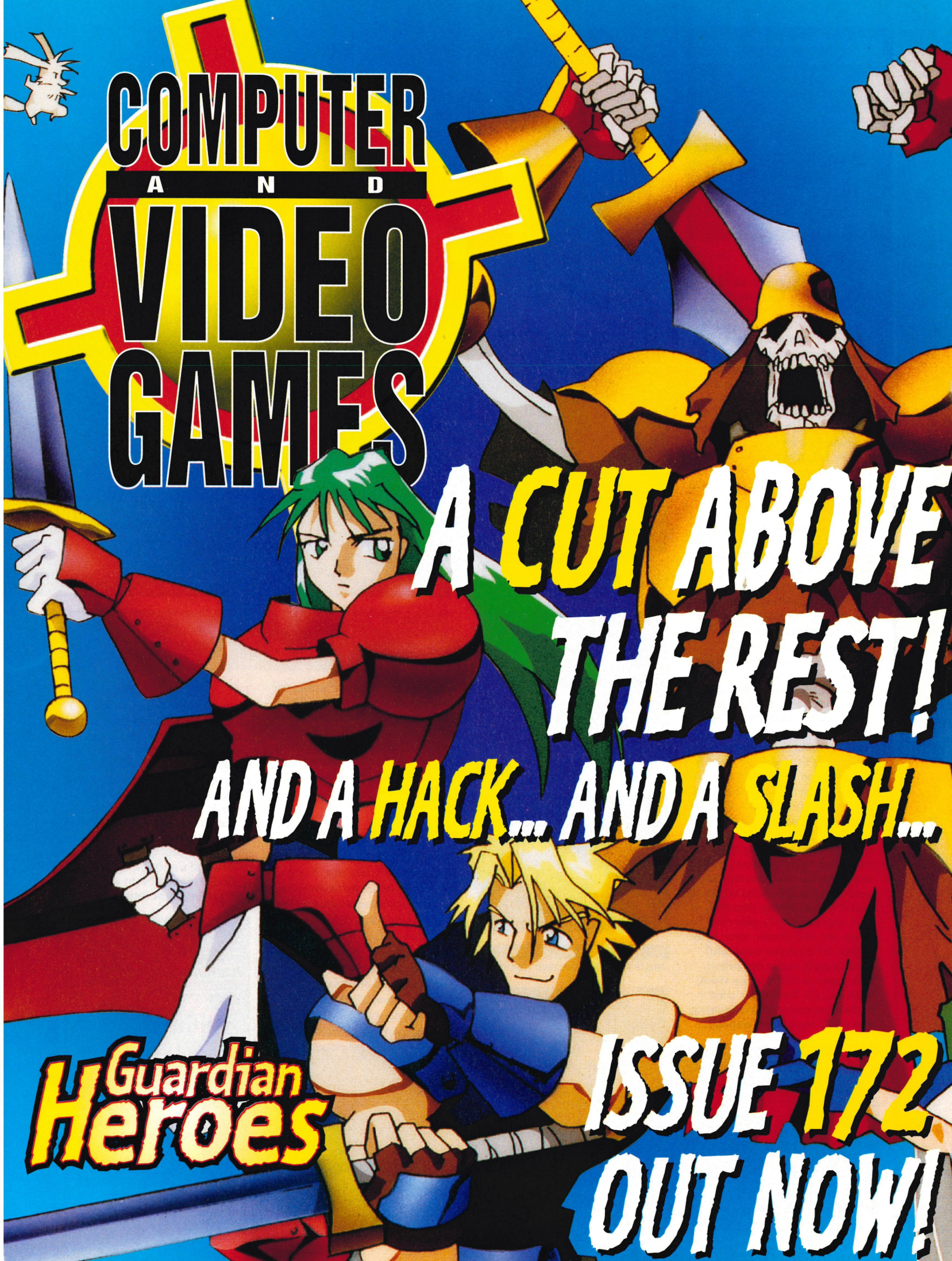
A simple test: if you have a beard, buy *Myst*.

RATING

GRAPHICS	85
ANIMATION	15
SOUND FX	86
MUSIC	78
LASTABILITY	73
PLAYABILITY	77

OVERALL

76



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GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: EASY
CONTINUES: VARIES
SKILL LEVELS: N/A

RELEASE FEBRUARY

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BY BMG

PLAYERS 1



For years and years the BBC have churned out loads of wildlife programmes where David Attenborough goes to far off lands and shows us loads of cute creatures we wish we had in England. He goes on and on about how we must save these animals because... well, because it would be a nice thing to do.

If Sir David had, however, sat down and put Gex on his PlayStation, he may have second thoughts. Indeed, it would be very satisfying indeed if next time he's running around some reptile-infested part of North America or the Pacific Islands he points to something like a gecko and tells you how much it reminds him of Gex, the annoying little sprite with the shades and nauseating voice. Even better would be for ol' Mister Nature Protector himself to pick up said gecko and twist its scrawny little neck and recommend that we all do the same.

Get the idea that I find Gex, the 'character', the most annoying piece of cuteness since St Winifred's School Choir went to Number One singing *There's no-one quite like Grandma*? Spot on.

In much the same way that Sonic ceased being a fuzzy 'n' cute little hedgehog and rapidly outstayed his welcome after becoming Sega's mascot, so Gex overstay's his welcome twenty seconds after the game starts. In fact it would appear that the only way to actually play the game and still remain sane, is to switch off both the music and speech right at the beginning. Just listen to that snappy voice, with its jolly 'humorous' patter in the impressive intro sequence, and you'll have heard enough.



GEX



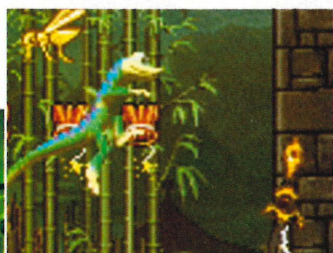
THE KUNG-FU SCENARIO IS ONE OF THE MORE BASIC LEVELS.



THE BIG GUYS ARE JUST AS LETHAL AS SOMETHING A THIRD OF THEIR SIZE.



THE TOON WORLD STILL FEATURES THOSE DANGEROUS FLYING TELLYS.



GEX CAN USE HIS TAIL TO WIPE OUT HIS ENEMIES EITHER AS A SWIPE OR AS A BOUNCE. NICE GUY!



ADVENTURES IN MODERN RECORDING

There are five levels of action for Gex to explore, each one split into mini-levels. You need to find the television remote control units to access each new section, plus locate the video cassettes, which have the all-important passwords emblazoned down their spines.

THE CEMETERY LEVEL

Ducks that look like Frankenstein's monster, *Friday the 13th*/Jason-style thugs with buzzsaw arms and hockey masks, dancing skulls and flying televisions, fire-breathing candles and dragons are just some of the foes poor old Gex has to try and tail-whip, fire-burn and leap over on this level. Then it's the big boss herself, Spin-n-Puke, who gobs out venom at all and sundry.



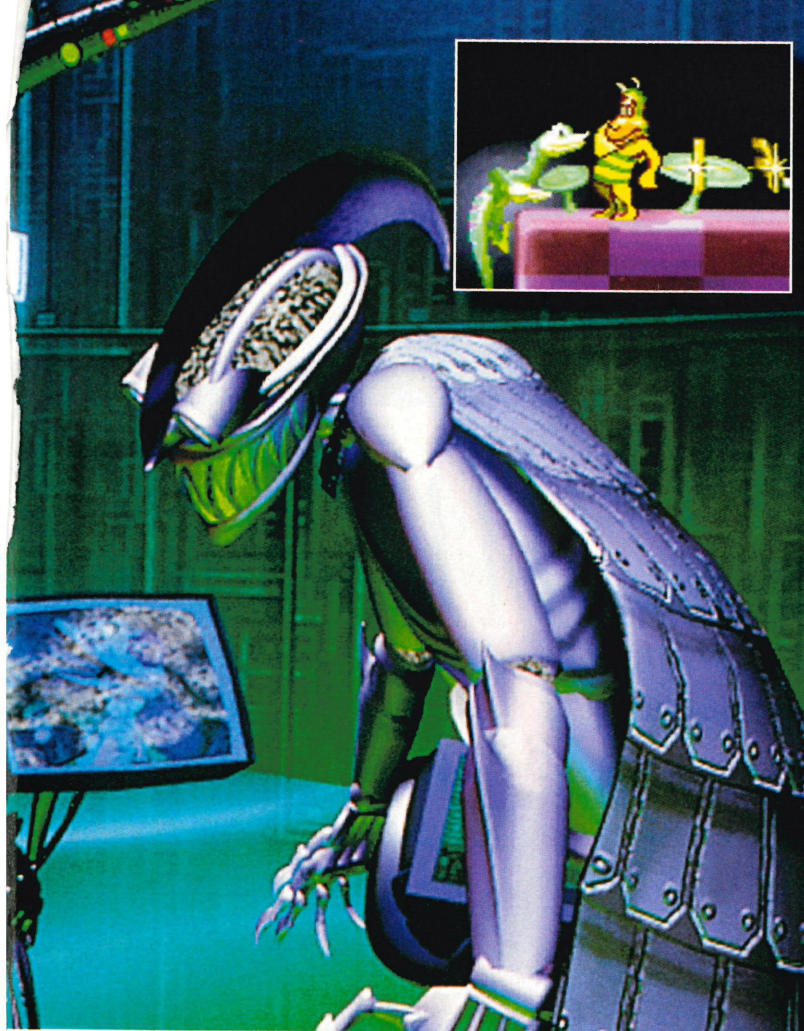
THE CARTOON LEVEL

Rather as it sounds, this level uses every cliché from those Saturday morning animated adventures you have to suffer in between watching Andi Peters camp around with the latest boy bands and the opportunity to win a Super NES. The boss here is a repulsive beer drinker known as the Flatulator, for obvious reasons. Mind you, get him really pissed and Gex has a real chance of finding the relevant remotes and getting away from it all.



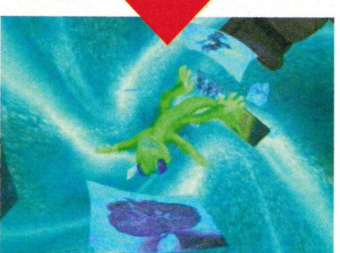
HAVING SWALLOWED A FIREBALL, GEX CAN SIMPLY FRY THE ARSE OFF THE BAD GUYS...

WHEREAS AN ICEBALL, RATHER OBVIOUSLY, FREEZES 'EM.



VIDEO KILLED THE RADIO STAR

Proving that which those guardians of our morality have been espousing for years, Gex demonstrates that too much television is bad for you when, in an impressive opening sequence, Rez snatches at him through the screen and sucks him into The Dome. From there Rez controls the weird realities Gex must battle through. Why he does this is, naturally, never made clear – maybe he works for Mary Whitehouse.



COMMENT

GARY

One of the weird things about being the new boy here is that everyone gives you the easy games to play. For 'easy' read 'ones no one else would touch'. Somewhere, Gex must have some good points, but after a few hours of trawling through platform after platform, dodging bad guy after bad guy, hearing Gex make witticism after witticism, I cannot, in all honesty, find very many good things to say. Okay, the whole thing looks very good – Gex moves around nicely, but then again, so they should on a PlayStation. The intro sequence is wonderfully animated and some of Gex's power-ups are useful and amusing. That's it really. The bad things? Regardless of how complicated it is, relentless playing of a platform game becomes tedious, and this reaches a point where the complexity level becomes irritating rather than inspiring. One other aggravation is that, until you are dead, you cannot access the opening options menu without resetting the PlayStation. A pain in the arse if you want to reconfigure your joystick or turn the music off.

THE JUNGLE LEVEL

No, not a new department at your local Virgin Megastore but a jungle full of weird creatures, old ruins and even more lethal fire-spitting, venom-shooting demons. Jungle Gym (groan) is the boss in charge of it all and the easiest to avoid (rather than defeat) to make your escape.

THE KUNG-FU LEVEL

Still living in the Seventies it seems, Gex dons his David Carradine persona and explores the world of martial arts, meeting up with assorted villains who make the Power Ranges look like a nursery school gymnastics team. The boss appears to be an outcast from *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, but with slightly more staying power.

REZ'S LEVEL

Rez is the bad guy from the intro sequence it appears, who sucks Gex into this nightmare world. This final level is the hardest to negotiate and could take quite some time to master. Keep track of your password for his level or you could find yourself back in the Cemetery Level very quickly. Rez is the baddest boss of them all and produces an astonishing arsenal at the last moment to stop Gex escaping back to his living room.

COMMENT

STEVE

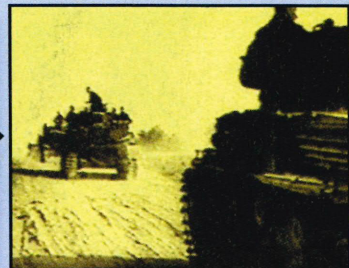
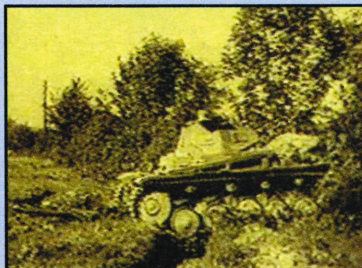
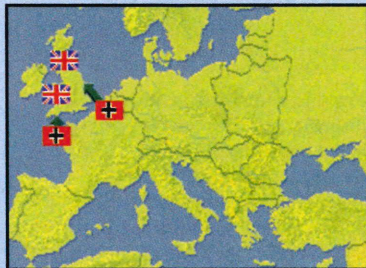
Nobody appreciates a decent platform game as much as me – but the dross we're seeing on the PlayStation is really annoying me. The key to a decent platform game is simplicity and ease of control. As Nintendo's *Mario* shows, if you have plentiful levels and a sprite that could turn on a sixpence, you're laughing. But, no, just because the PlayStation can handle fantastic sprites, we get the likes of *Johnny Bazzookatone*, *Rayman* and now *Gex* – all of which look the business but fail at the gameplay hurdle. *Gex* starts off well enough, with a main sprite who can perform a number of attack and defensive routines. However, the levels are dull to the extreme with all-too-familiar bad guys returning, and level designs which mean you often can't see an acid pit until Gex falls in it. Add to this frustrating gameplay, speech that doubles the user's annoyance (the samples are irritating beyond belief), and you have a game that tries desperately hard to be entertaining, yet only succeeds in annoying. Poor.

RATING

GRAPHICS	69
ANIMATION	83
SOUND FX	65
MUSIC	50
LASTABILITY	59
PLAYABILITY	69
OVERALL	68



Enter a campaign and your progress is shown on the overall battle map as well as highlighted by short video clips of authentic World War II footage. Although grainy and, obviously, in black and white, they make an otherwise visually depressing game a little more bearable.



GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM
CONTINUES: MEMORY CARD
SKILL LEVELS: 3

RELEASE OUT NOW

PRICE £44.99

BY MINDSCAPE

PLAYERS 1-2



Panzer General



he sad, geeky image associated with wargamers is justified, to some extent at least. Just look at *Panzer General*. To the average gamer it looks laborious and uninteresting, its bland presentation being as appealing as a mouldy cheese sandwich covered in green hairs. However, avid wargamers will cream their pants over the authentic stats, units and scenarios presented in the game as the PlayStation has never been blessed with something quite so technically comprehensive or historically accurate. Or dull.

But then *Panzer General* never claims to be a thrill-a-minute rollercoaster-ride of a video game. It's far from action-packed, and rather than directly controlling individual units groups of tanks, the infantry and aircraft are issued orders, either to move across the hex-based terrain or to engage the enemy in combat. Skirmishes are accompanied by brief battle scenes; digitised footage filmed during the World War II adds a little monochrome gloss plus a handful of campaign missions stretching from 1939 right up until the end of the war in 1943 and a staggering forty individual scenarios. There's even the option to command either the Axis or Allied troops, taking control of anything from foot soldiers, to artillery cannons, bomber squadrons to submarine fleets.

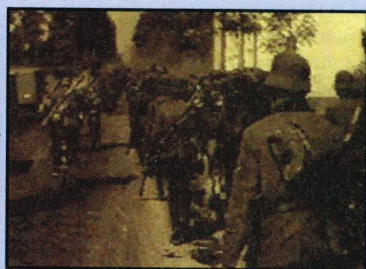
The game is turn-based, each unit given action with which to move and fire. Combat is resolved not through skill but purely on statistics, the outcome determined by the strength, size and type of each fighting unit. Veteran squads benefit from experience and are therefore more effective, but still a team of battle-scarred soldiers is dramatically outclassed by a couple of Panzer battle tanks. Cunning tactics are the order of the day, then.



HITLER'S EUROPEAN TOUR

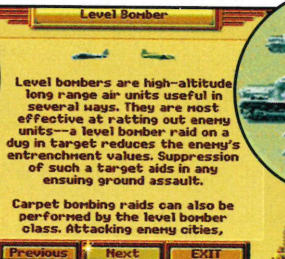
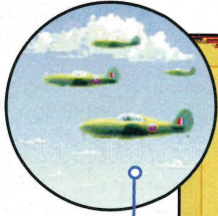
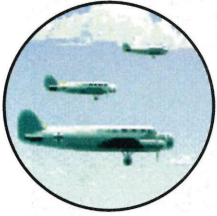
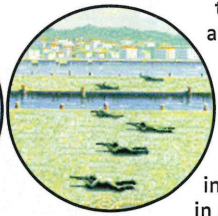
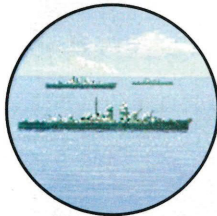
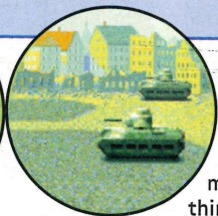
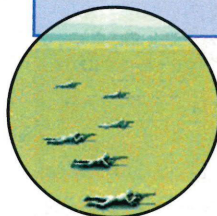
Panzer General offers an extensive selection of battle scenarios, from one-off missions to exhaustive campaigns. The individual scenarios, of which there are forty, range from tiny skirmishes to full-blown conflicts, lasting anything from 15 minutes to well over an hour. The campaigns are even bigger, covering battles across the whole of Europe rather than focusing on individual conflicts. The objectives are varied too, with simple scout runs kicking off the battle to all-out war between hundreds of units at the close of the game.



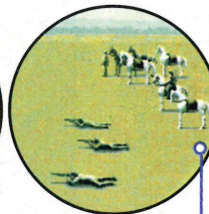
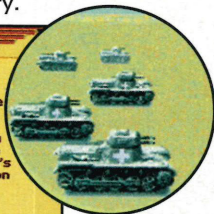
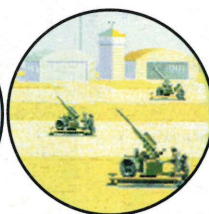
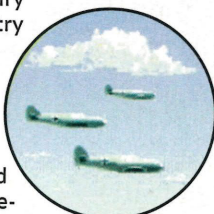
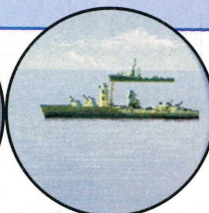
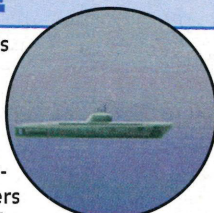


ACHTUNG!

Both the Allied and Axis armies are split into 18 unit types which are further divided into specific regiments. For example, anything from standard soldiers to paratroopers to cavalry appears under the Infantry banner while over twenty German and American armoured vehicles are listed under the Tank heading. Every unit is detailed in *Panzer General's* comprehensive on-line glossary.



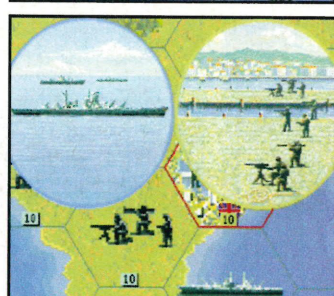
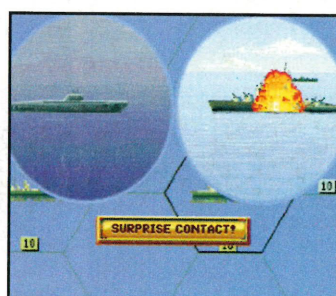
UNIT TYPES RANGE FROM AIRCRAFT TO INFANTRY, SHIPS TO SUBMARINES.



ADDITIONALLY DIFFERENT UNITS CAN BE COMBINED, SO FOOT TROOPS CAN BE JOINED BY CAVALRY.

REICH SAID FRED

Although *Panzer General* looks a bit overwhelming, it's actually very easy to play. Each unit under your command is given action points that allows them to move, fire or a combination of the two. Obviously the unit and terrain type affects the distance that they can move, and therefore an armoured car driving along a tarmac road can move a lot further in a single go than squad of foot troops wadding through swamp land. Combat is just as simple, and is initiated by moving into the hex adjacent to the enemy and choosing to attack. The results are calculated automatically and the relevant casualties deducted from each side.



COMMENT

STEVE

While I appreciate the depth to Mindscape's *Panzer General*, I soon found my attention wandering. After struggling to get to grips with the units, after a while it soon became a rather mundane task and even plotting a fantastic attack strategy fails to set the pulse racing. Strategy games are always a niche market, and more suited to PCs (where they can offer a considerably cheaper price point) than the PlayStation. Despite the occasional FMV sequence, there is very little to catch the passing punter's eye, and although there are a number of scenarios, the initial problems with mastering the controls will put potential adopters off. Personally, for my strategic kicks I'll opt for Microprose's *X-COM*, as it at least tries to brighten the proceedings up, and I don't have the patience to struggle for the little reward *Panzer General* offers. A fish out of water.

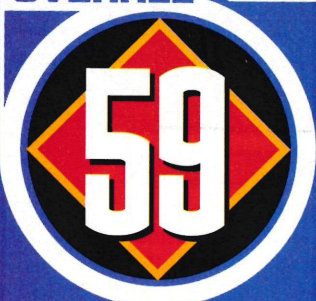
COMMENT

ALEX

Panzer General is very much an acquired taste. It is, without a doubt, a full-blown strategy game that favours historical accuracy and authenticity rather than visual sophistication. The game is therefore not immediately accessible and the majority of gamers will find *Panzer General* hard work, at least initially. After a little practice commanding entire battle squadrons is a simple process, if a bit laborious. What's more, your efforts are rewarded with nothing more than personal satisfaction and the occasional film clip. Graphical shortcomings aside, *Panzer General* is the most comprehensive wargame on the PlayStation, covering just about every aspect of World War II meticulously and in detail. Each of the scenarios and campaigns is based on a real-life encounter both the Axis and Allied armies are comprised of the same tanks, infantry and aircraft that fought during the Forties. It's a wargamer's wet dream but every other gamer's nightmare, and is by no means a game you can just pick up and play. Patience is essential.

RATING

GRAPHICS	47
ANIMATION	42
SOUND FX	54
MUSIC	49
LASTABILITY	57
PLAYABILITY	59
OVERALL	59





GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: EASY
CONTINUUES: N/A
SKILL LEVELS: 1

RELEASE MARCH

PRICE £44.99

BY EA

PLAYERS 1-2

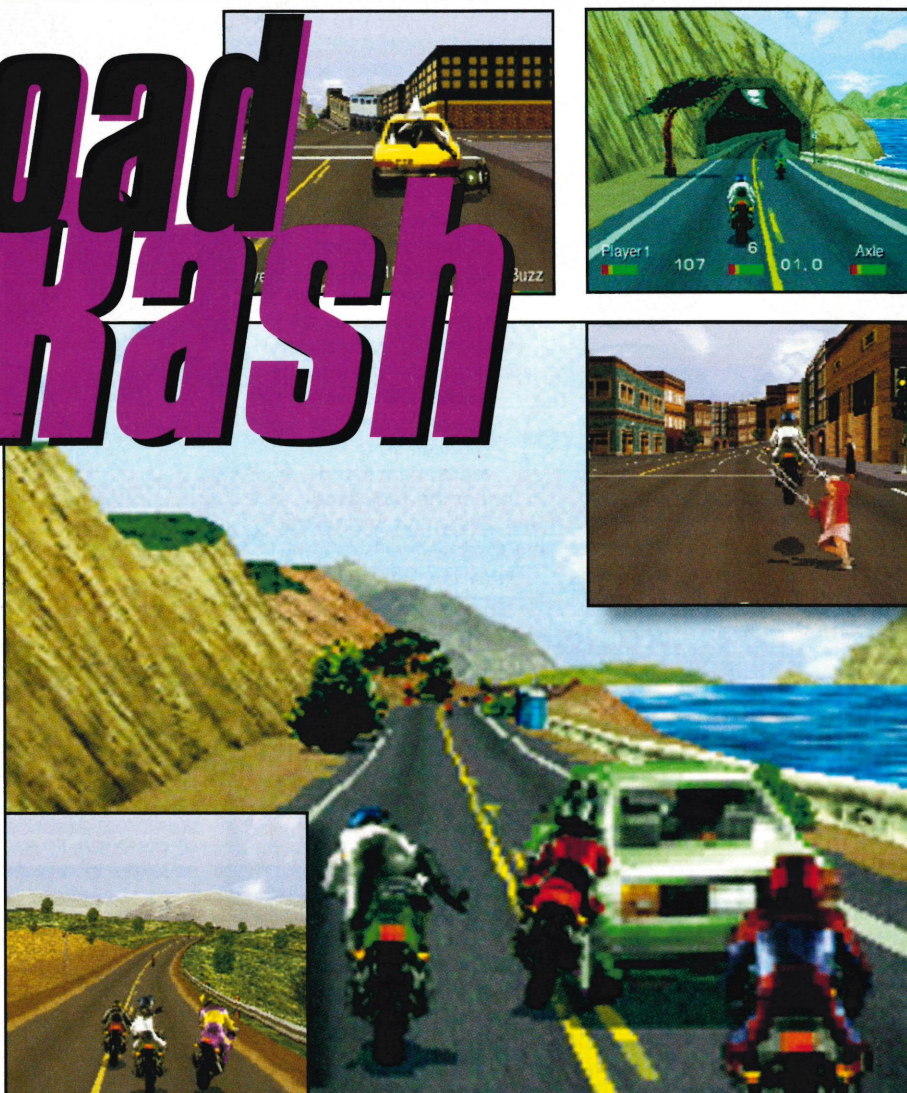
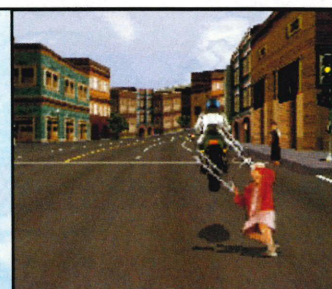
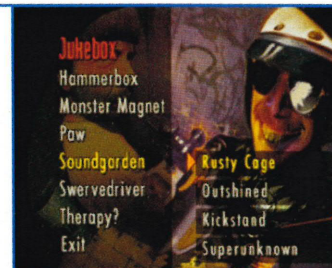


Before *ESPN*, there was *Road Rash*. In fact, for as long as we can remember there has been *Road Rash*. One of the first third-party software houses to embrace the 16bit consoles, EA followed a selection of dire Amiga ports with a game which soon became their biggest money-spinner until their lucrative licence with FIFA was agreed.

Recognising the success of Sega's home-grown *Super Hang-On* conversion and the coin-op fad of one-on-one fighting games, EA merged the two. The player was duly entered into a cross-country race where there were absolutely no rules. The basic aim was to get to the finish line first – and in one piece – and a variety of kicks and weapons were on offer to prevent the CPU-controlled racers doing the same. Video game players are a fickle bunch, though, and the third excursion of the *Road Rash* theme coincided with the release of the first available 32bit console – the ill-fated 3DO. All of a sudden, the spartan fields and blocky sprites of the Megadrive lost their appeal, as people realised the 'Next Gen' would allow them to do the same but through crowded streets which looked fairly real. EA dutifully answered these prayers for the Panasonic machine and now, the legend hits the PlayStation as EA go head-to-head with *ESPN* in a battle for the roads.

MUSIC MAESTRO, PLEASE

The 3DO version of *Road Rash* was one step ahead of SIE's *WipeOut*, and was one of the first games to use recognisable bands for its soundtrack. Depending on the player's mood, they can take their pick from one of a dozen tracks from the likes of Swervedriver, Therapy?, and Soundgarden. It has to be said, though, despite the impressive line up of groups, the music doesn't integrate as well with *Road Rash* as the Chemical Brothers and co did for *WipeOut*, and the result is a trifle odd and almost seems an afterthought.



COURSE YOU CAN

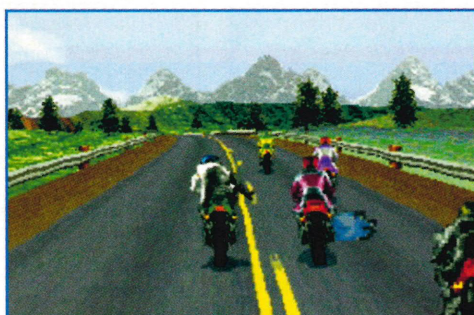
Road Rash offers five courses, each of which is liberally dotted with obstacles such as ice, oil spills, and other vehicles. Similarly, detours

and short cuts are also available for the vigilant biker, although the latter can prove a tad hairy...



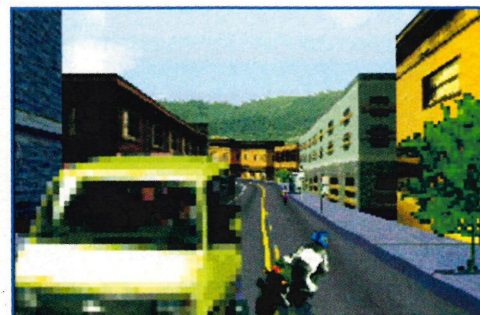
CITY

Jaywalkers and a wealth of roadside obstacles make this one of the trickier levels. The traffic is far busier, too.



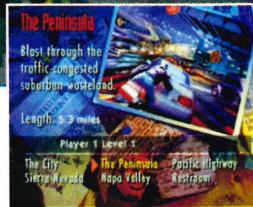
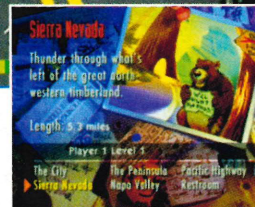
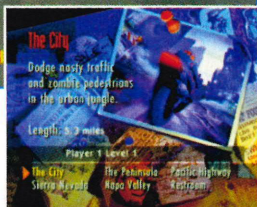
SIERRA NEVADA

A barren desert, with just the occasional tow truck going the other way, and a couple of alternative routes.



PENINSULA

Yet another country excursion, but as this course actually starts in the city, you'll really appreciate the quieter roads.



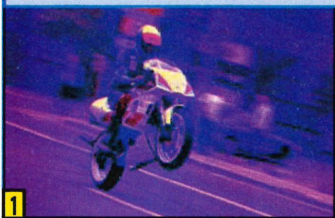
ROUTE 666

Anyone familiar with London life and the nature of bicycle couriers will be instantly at home with *Road Rash*. The game offers five racing areas — including beach resorts, cityscapes, and the great outdoors — with the player competing against fourteen CPU competitors. The face buttons control the bike's speed and brakes, with the secondary buttons allowing the player to lash out at riders they're passing with either their feet or the age-old bikers' weapon — a rusty chain. With these standards set, the racers roar off into the 3D scrolling road, avoiding crashes

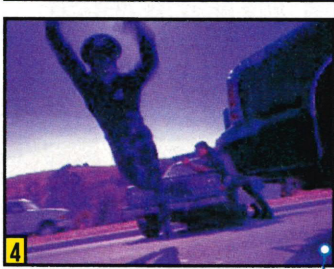


with other (non-participating) vehicles, hopping on to pavements to dodge jaywalking pedestrians, and keeping an eye out for other strategically-placed hazards. The first past the post is deemed the victor, and there's no glory for second place. How true.

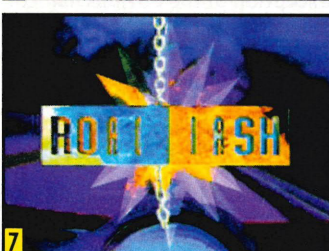
ROLL 'EM



1 Recreated from the 3DO game, *Road Rash* throws up a variety of FMV sequences at every given opportunity. The game opens with a scene-setting intro, with bikers thwarting the *Dukes of Hazzard*-style Hick police, while totalling your vehicle prompts a comedy scene of the player's on-screen alter ego waving their fist as others go by. In all, there are some ten or so sequences, but for some reason they all suffer from a pink overlay effect which takes away some of their dramatic appeal.



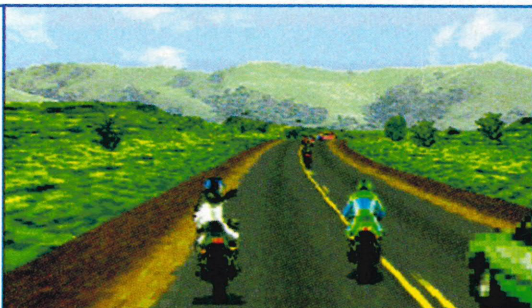
THE INTRO SEQUENCE IS REMINISCENT OF AN EPISODE OF THE *DUKES OF HAZZARD*, WITH BIKERS SHOWING UP HICKVILLE COPS ON THE WAY TO THE NEXT RACE.



COMMENT

ALEX

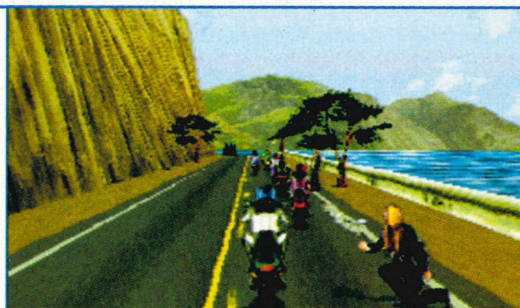
While *Road Rash* is conceptually very good, in practice it's not quite the exhilarating seat-of-the-pants ride it promises to be. Rather than working your way to the front of the pack through skillful driving and a hefty bike-kick, most races can be won by sticking the throttle on full and weaving with ease through the other bikers. Battling with the other competitors just slows you down, so if you do choose to fight rather than fly, chances are you'll lose the race. *Road Rash*, then, has very little to offer — it's a straightforward racing game, and one that pales in comparison to EA's superior *ESPN Extreme Games*.



Player 1 102 12

NAPA VALLEY

The wine region, and home to a brilliant detour. The course is also quieter than most, allowing for excellent overtaking opportunities.



Player 1 10 15

PACIFIC HIGHWAY

This course is set against a beach and cliff backdrop. Sadly, it isn't possible to fall over the side, but the views are excellent despite the lack of Pamela Anderson.



COMMENT

STEVE

Road Rash used to be one of my favourite Megadrive games, but I can't say it has transferred to the PlayStation at all well. In what is a very basic port from the eighteen month-old 3DO code, the basic idea has dated badly, with *ESPN Extreme Games* doing all the same things but a lot better. Graphically, the game is adequate with the five stages not exactly breaking down the barriers of backdrop design, and becoming much of a muchness. Other niggling game-play faults also annoy, and considering *Road Rash* is supposed to be a game that mixes racing with violence, it rarely supplies both in the same game. For example, while it is very satisfying to kick the crap out of a passing biker, as you do so the other racers zoom past — while, conversely, it is all-too easy to go at full pelt and avoid any confrontations. There is a modicum of enjoyment to be had, as running over jaywalkers and finding shortcuts adds a little variety to the basic action, but ultimately there isn't enough substance in *Road Rash* to sustain prolonged interest.

RATING

GRAPHICS	71
ANIMATION	62
SOUND FX	56
MUSIC	81
LASTABILITY	52
PLAYABILITY	70
OVERALL	64

64

GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
CONTINUES: INFINITE
SKILL LEVELS: 4

RELEASE OUT NOW

PRICE VARIOUS

BY XING

PLAYERS 1



With all eyes on Nintendo's Ultra 64 and its promises of 3D landscapes that never end, and a

mixture of the Mario series' playability and 64bit graphics, video games have never been so exciting. Similarly, with the first shots and video footage of Nintendo's dream machine emerging, people are looking to the PlayStation to stave off the new console. Of the games displayed for the Ultra, by far the most anticipated and impressive was *Mario 3D*. Already regarded as the ultimate in platform games, Shigeru Miyamoto has taken his plumber and dropped him into a 3D world replete with fully light-sourced renditions of old 2D favourites. It looks, to be totally honest, incredible – but let's not discount the Sony machine just yet.

With Sega set to combat the Ultra's *3D Mario* with a similar title, the PlayStation has pre-empted the Mario release as Xing unveil *Floating Runner*. Initially resembling *Jumping Flash*, *Floating Runner* is a platform game which is set in a totally 3D environment. Thus, in addition to scurrying around and marvelling as the 3D forests, platforms and cities are updated as only the PlayStation can, an extra layer is (literally) added to the proceedings.

Although the plot is not new (our two heroes are merely out to rescue mates from a baddy-infested castle) never before has a platform game looked so very good.



ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Floating Runner is played within a wholly 3D environment, which scrolls around the selected character. As the player picks their way through the stages, the action is viewed from above and slightly behind the polygon-based sprite (although the angle can be altered using the L2 button), with the assorted trees and platforms built up as they approach. To break the player in, the first level is a very simple excursion through a forest which introduces the enemy sprites and allows the player to get to grips with the controls as Lay and Cress scuttle over bridges, open chests and blow the assorted enemy sprites to bits – while ensuring the end is reached before a level timer reaches zero. Later levels, however, throw greater hazards into the mix and platform game fans brought up with the likes of Mario and Sonic will find themselves taking an extra dimension into consideration as they search for the transparent marker which acts as the level exit.



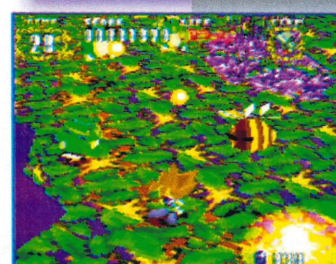
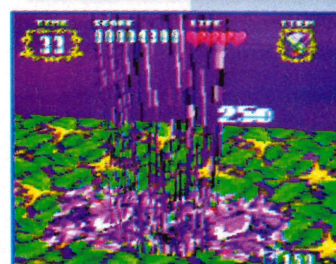
Floating Runner

LOVELY MOVERS

Before the levels unfold, the player is offered the choice between two sprites. Lay is the male of the pair, while blonde-haired Cress is available for those in touch with their feminine side. With the exception of the obvious hair colouring, both characters are pretty much identical in terms of ability, with the four face buttons launching the polygon heroes into jumps and runs. Similarly, each character is armed with an infinite supply of spheres which are thrown at the

enemy sprites dotted around each world – or to break open the chests which are spread around the play area. With the enemy coming thick and fast, extra agility has been bestowed upon the polygon pair, and pressing the L1 and R1 buttons prompts them to somersault to the side, with enough height gained, to land on any platforms within the area.





COMMENT

ALEX

The beauty of *Floating Runner* is its originality. A 3D platform game is practically unheard of, but Japanese developer Xing has pulled it off surprisingly well. Okay, the viewpoint (that almost looks down on the action) isn't always that practical and occasionally the graphics glitch unsightly, but these minor gripes are overshadowed by the game itself, which is great fun to play. The levels are varied, the sprites are cute and some neat visual touches make *Floating Runner* a joy to play. Unfortunately awkward controls occasionally make it frustrating to play, especially when you're dumped back to the start of a level, but persevere and this beast will provide hours of ledge-leaping enjoyment.

CUTE BUT DEADLY

Floating Runner plays host to a wealth of cute but deadly sprites, out to terminate the two would-be rescuers. Both characters begin each stage with four hearts. These (obviously) represent their health, and contact with the said sprites or the flak they spew out, and lose their colour with every hit. The enemy sprites are a motley bunch and include what appear to be rabbits, mice, snakes, and wasps in their numbers, while the larger members resemble walking tree trunks, blokes flying around in clouds, and bizarre jellyfish. Thankfully, a couple of direct hits with the pairs' aforementioned throwing balls are enough to kill the opposition, and the dead assailants duly transform into red and blue gems which are converted into bonus points.

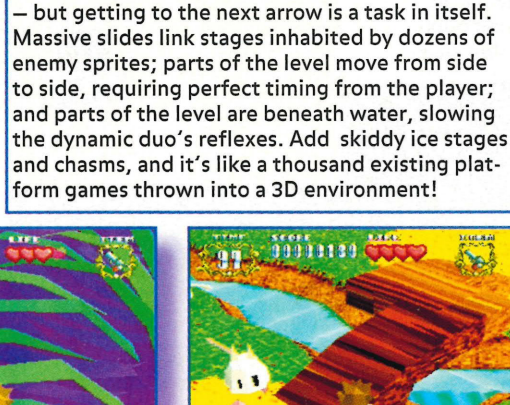
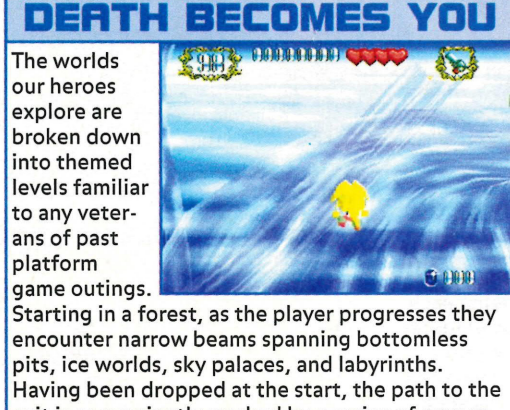
KILLING THE ENEMY SPRITES REDUCES THEM TO GEMS, WHICH ARE DULY ADDED TO THE PLAYER'S SCORE.



A NEW DIMENSION

The 3D nature of the levels means that things aren't always what they seem. What may initially seem a dead-end can often be by-passed with a spot of lateral thinking and well-timed jumping. A perfect example is found in the second stage of the forest level, which sees our heroes scaling an enormous tree in order to reach the exit. On first sight, the scrolling area reveals no exit, with only a handful of sawn-off tree trunks offering any visual difference from the top-down-viewed pines. However, if the player lands on one of

these trunks, they act as stepping stones across the top of the trees, with the ground receding as Lay or Cress climb ever higher. The downside, though, is that the angle used to view the action is a little acute and too much precision is needed to make it from branch to branch — especially since the offered views make it impossible to gauge how close the sprites are to the edge of the branches! This results in plentiful frustration as a promising climb results in a long fall to the ground, and even more time whittled off the ever-decreasing timer.



TREASURE CHESTS CONTAIN EXTRA HEALTH, BUT BECOME HARDER TO FIND AS THE GAME PROGRESSES.

DEATH BECOMES YOU

The worlds our heroes explore are broken down into themed levels familiar to any veterans of past platform game outings.

Starting in a forest, as the player progresses they encounter narrow beams spanning bottomless pits, ice worlds, sky palaces, and labyrinths. Having been dropped at the start, the path to the exit is conveniently marked by a series of arrows — but getting to the next arrow is a task in itself. Massive slides link stages inhabited by dozens of enemy sprites; parts of the level move from side to side, requiring perfect timing from the player; and parts of the level are beneath water, slowing the dynamic duo's reflexes. Add skiddy ice stages and chasms, and it's like a thousand existing platform games thrown into a 3D environment!

COMMENT

STEVE

The more I play *Floating Runner*,

the more it brings out the schizophrenic in me. On the one hand, I really like the speed of play it offers, and the extra dimension the 3D adds — some of the levels require real lateral thinking to escape. However, the viewpoint used means that plotting a path through some of the trickier stages is made even harder, while the collision detection between sprite and background obstacles is decidedly dodgy in places. While your character will be fine standing on the edge of a branch once, if the move is repeated it'll fall to the ground. The situation is exasperated further with finicky controls and inertia making the characters slow to respond. Perseverance, however, brings its own rewards, and *Floating Runner* does contain enough secrets to keep the player busy — and graphically it always manages to throw up a new surprise (the ice slides deserving praise especially). However, with no PAL release planned as of yet, it seems this promising platformer is destined for unwarranted obscurity. Well worth sticking with.

RATING

GRAPHICS	84
ANIMATION	72
SOUND FX	77
MUSIC	73
PLAYABILITY	83
OVERALL	79





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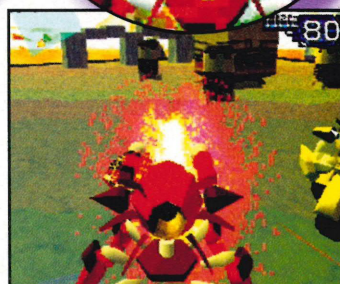
ROBO PIT

By: Altron

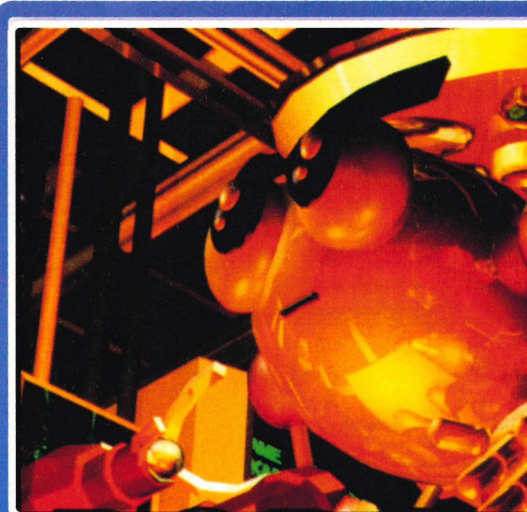
Robo Pit is best described as *Jumping Flash* meets *Cybersled* meets *Tekken*. Not an easy mix of styles, I'm sure you'll agree, but nevertheless *Robo Pit* is enjoyable enough, if a little repetitive in the long term. Starring a host of robot pugilists, the player is given control of a rank outsider entrant in a huge scrap for superiority. Over 100 robots are ranked in order of weapons and ability, and the player's CPU-defined or home-grown (courtesy of a rather smart robot editor) combatant is right at the bottom of the pile, armed with mere fists to begin with. Thus, as seen in Sylvester Stallone's *Rocky* films, *Robo Pit* follows one fighter's attempts to become the greatest — with the odds firmly stacked against them.

The actual battles take place in the all-too-familiar surroundings of a square arena. Dotted throughout the many arenas are a host of blocks to hide behind, and, somewhere, your opponent. With the face buttons prompting the player's onscreen fighter to jump (and this is where the *Jumping Flash* similarities begin), lash out with left and right hooks, or block. Similarly, the L and R buttons allow the robot to sidestep out of danger. As such, initially, the basic fighting is limited to pummeling the opposing droid until their energy is whittled away as they return the favour, and the first few bouts are a little dull to say the least. However, as victories are gained, the rise up the ranks is accelerated with new weapons to strap on to the robot fighter — these include axes, lasers, missiles, etc, and are essential as the higher fighters are equally well equipped.

Sadly, despite changes of locale, extra weaponry, and the variety of opposition, *Robo Pit* proves a tad simplistic after prolonged play. That said, owners of NTSC machines who see one at a reduced price (as seen on the majority of lesser-known import titles — Hermie Hopperhead, anyone?), would be advised to give this a whirl. (SM)



AS THE PLAYER PROGRESSES, EXTRA ARMAMENTS ARE ADDED TO THEIR DROID'S CAPABILITIES.



OVERALL
51

TWO-TEN KAKU



THE ICONS COLLECTED ENHANCE THE SHIP'S WEAPON POWER. BUT YOU KNEW THAT ALREADY.



BY: Club Dep

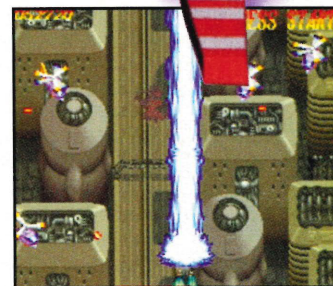
Oh I don't know, folks. I mean, just

how many of these top-down shoot 'em ups do you want? Certainly they're all full of wonderfully colourful graphics, but at the end of the day you just sit there with your finger of the rapid fire button, watching. With *Two-Ten Kaku* being a Japanese game, you can be sure that there are billions of weird and wonderful aliens to look at, along with enormous weapons and billions of power-ups, but as for gameplay you can get your teeth into, er... move along please, there's nothing to see here.

There are three different craft to choose from, each with their own particular weapon that can be powered up through three different stages: normal, bloody ludicrous, and Japanese. They also share two special weapons; one a very strange 'smart bomb' that actually resembles a massive carpet spitting poo everywhere, and the other an incredibly thick laser that kills anything it touches (not to mention obscures any enemy shots coming your way).

The levels the player's unimaginatively-designed ship passes through are themed with tons of little aliens to wade through, and a plethora of imaginative and colourful end of level guardians. Other than that, there's nothing here we haven't seen a dozen times before (every time the Japanese imports come in strangely) and unless you have a particular love for the genre, I can't think of any reason why you'd want to exchange monies for this.

(MB)



ONE OF THE MORE BASIC PROBLEMS WITH TWO-TEN KAKU IS THAT, ONCE TOOLED UP, THE PLAYER IS HIGH-ON INVULNERABLE TO ATTACK.



OVERALL
76

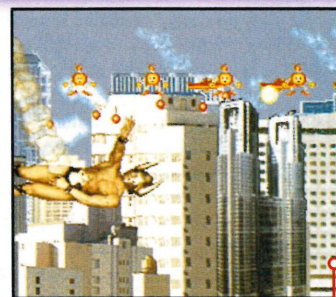
THE ULTIMATE INVINCIBLE GALAXY STRONGMAN

SUPER BIG BROTHER

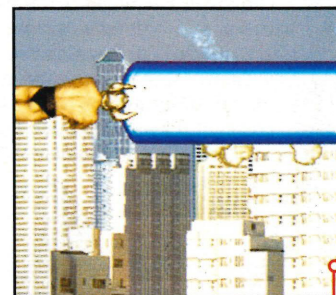
By: NCS

Or, to give this oddity its Japanese name: *Choaniki-kyukyokumutekigingasaikyotootoo!* What we have here is the most warped game you are ever likely to see. At its most basic level *Super Big Brother* is a shoot 'em up along the lines of *Nemesis* and *Scramble*. However, the graphics and humour in the game are bizarre beyond belief, with huge men wearing baldy hats acting as spaceships while fighting off attacks from end of level bosses obviously inspired by Terry Gilliam. And the weirdness doesn't end there. Basically, for reasons only known to the bizarre Japanese plot, the world is being attacked by anything ranging from hot water bottles to men on missiles, and Super Big Brother (or a female character – not so good little sister?) must shoot them using his blue lasers. If, however, Big Brother is hit too many times, he falls off screen with his crotch on fire and the game switches to a very basic blaster with the said bosses appearing at the end of every stage.

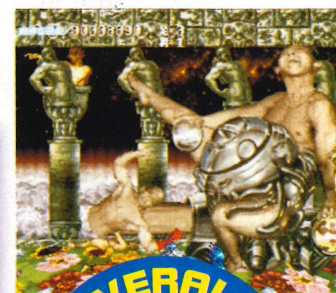
Let's face it, with humour even Monty Python would find a little bizarre, there is no way 'The Ultimate Invincible Galaxy Strongman' is ever going to make it to these shores other than in import stockists. This is probably for the best, however, as without the sheer novelty of blowing up a boss who has a man with rubber arms wedged into his pants (I kid ye not), there is very little of note here. The sprite detection is dodgy to say the least, and the humour itself – though constantly throwing up new adversaries – soon becomes tiresome. If this is Japanese humour, come back Cannon and Ball: all is forgiven. Nearly. (SM)



SHOULD THE PLAYER COLLIDE WITH TOO MANY ENEMY SPRITES, HE FALLS, GRASPING HIS PACKET AS HE DOES SO.



ALTHOUGH THE ENEMY SPRITES ARE TINY, THEY ARE IN PLENTIFUL SUPPLY. HENCE THIS HUGE LASER.



THE THIRD STAGE TAKES OUR HEROES UNDERWATER.

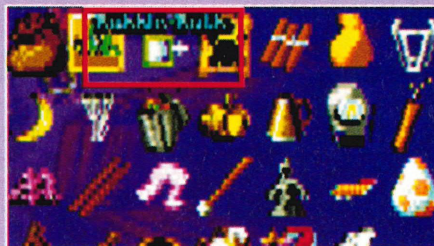
OVERALL
53

Discworld

Managed to get through Act Two yet? Maybe not, because tracking down all that gold is a pretty hard thing to do. Oh yes, you may well have discovered the secret of the Brotherhood, who their members are and all the rest of it, but the best puzzles are yet to come. Fancy learning to dance? Meeting transvestite builders? Blowing a man out of a blocked chimney stack? If the answer to any of these questions is "yes", then Act Two is the one for you. But what is this obsession with custard? If you want to know, read on. Following on from those in Issue 4, here we are with the last in our series of tips for getting quickly around Terry Pratchett's Discworld.

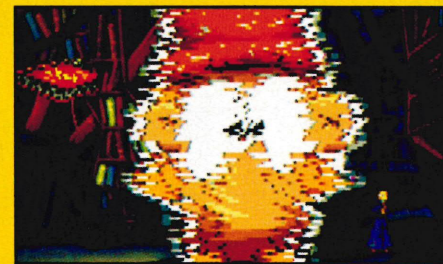
A How do I get the Gold Bell?

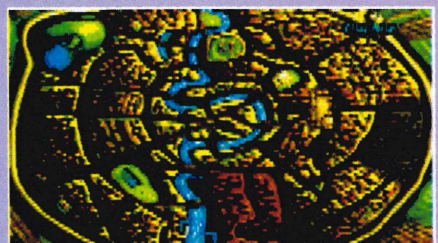
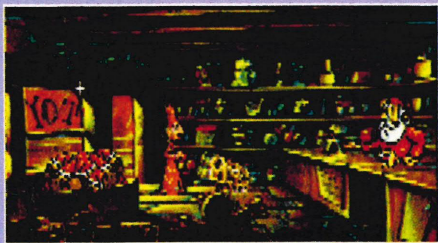
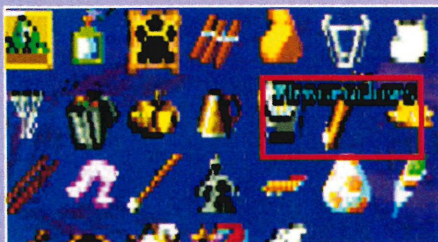
A bit of a runaround this one, involving a few familiar characters. Basically, the gold bell is atop the Fool's hat, and he lives in the Patrician's palace. Having gone there, it becomes a necessary to get him to take his hat off, and the only way he'll do that is to have a bath. Having established that, you need to visit three or four places to get what you want. The dustbins at the back of the University need to be put into your inventory, followed by the bubble bath you'll nick from the Inn. Next up, pop along to see the Psychiatrickrist. Once in with him, you'll be asked to perform a few tests, including cards. When he offers you two cards, pick them up and then leave. Head back to the Palace. There you will encounter the two guards again, but this time they won't fall for your attempts to talk them into thumping each other. However, if you pass them one of the Psychiatrickrist's cards, they get into a discussion about their spouses and then begin to fight with each other. Using this distraction, you can slip past them. Once inside, find the Fool again and chuck the contents of the dustbin all over him. Whay-Hey, now he needs a bath. Follow him into his room and you'll see he's got into the bath, leaving his hat with the Gold Bell on it nearby. Even now, it's not just a case of nicking it, because if you go near it, the Fool's jester doll starts yelling his head off. To get around this, throw the bubble bath into the bath and it fills up with bubbles, hiding you from the doll's sight. Now you can pick up the hat peacefully and the Gold Bell is all yours.



B Where is the Gold-Handled Brush?

Easy to find but ingenuity needs to be used to actually get it. Ingenuity and a degree of amorality! The brush is the property of another member of the Brotherhood, the Chimney-Sweet. He's busy cleaning the Alchemist's chimney, but enticing him down will not be easy. So, oddly enough the first place you need to visit is the toy-shop where you saw the little mauve donkeys earlier. They have now been replaced by tiny Santa Claus-like dolls and you need to put one of these into your inventory. Now head back to the guard at the City gates. He, however, has deserted his post but left behind the crate that looked so enticing earlier. Pick it up. The only other thing you need now are the matches that were given free in the Broken Drum inn earlier on. If you refused them then, shame on you, but you can easily nip back and bag more. Now head towards the alley and use a secret tile to project you onto a roof. Look to the right hand chimney pots and stuff the Santa-Claus dolls into the one you can get at. This causes the Alchemist's house to fill up with smoke and he runs out. Nip back down and go in, and take your crate. Inside is gunpowder and a fuse. Place the gunpowder in the fireplace, attack the fuse and leave. When you are outside again, you'll see the fuse dangling from the bottom of a drainpipe. Light it and run. Bang goes the gunpowder and if you wait in the alley you'll see the Chimney Sweep blasted out of the chimney pot and land in front of you. Grab his Gold-Handled Brush and viola!





C How do I get hold of the Gate Pass?

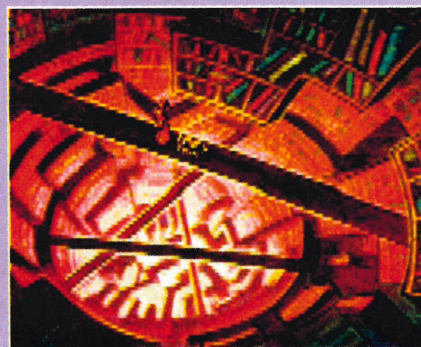
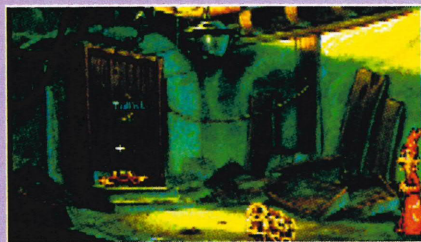
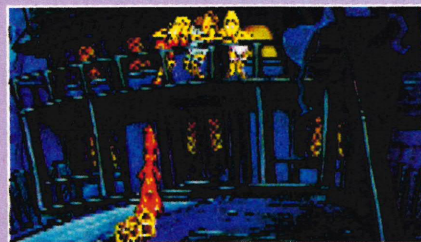
You need the Gate Pass to enable you to find the Stonemason's trowel. But it takes a long time to get it. Firstly, you need to leave the City, but you need a gate pass to do so. The first thing you encounter in the street is the Street Urchin. While chatting to him, another man arrives and he and the Urchin perform a strange dance. Afterwards the Urchin denies all knowledge of this. Then the other man turns up again and the dance starts over. Very confused, ask the Urchin about it again and this time he reveals that it is a bizarre handshake. However, it can only be revealed once you've proven yourself to be a real man. This might seem inconsequential, but it is important much later on. Now head for the courtyard and go into the inn on via the left-hand door – the one that was previously locked. This leads you to a bedroom where you'll find a bed sheet. Place this in your inventory and pop back out and visit the depraved Broken

Drum inn. Amidst the general hubbub, you'll find a very frightened man. He tells you that he had a Gate Pass but it was stolen by a ghost. When he's finished, head back to the Unseen University and use L-Space to go back in time, arrive in the poor man's bedroom and put the sheet on. He'll think you're a ghost and you can rummage around his room, finding what you need. Eventually you'll find enough clues to open the safe, but all you find is a hammer, which appears to make no sense. So, go back to the present, go up to the man in the pub and ask about the hammer. He explains that the hammer is needed to break open the box containing the Gate Pass. Ah-ha! So back to the Unseen University, back through L-Space, scare the poor guy witless again and break open the box with the hammer. One Gate Pass is yours.



D How do I prove I'm a man?

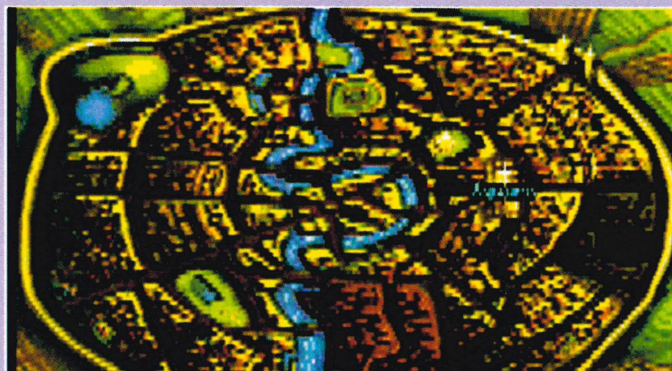
Simple, really, you need to meet up with Big Sally. But who is she, where is she and how does she help? First of all you need to leave the City and go to the Ramtop Mountain Road. As you go down this, you'll come across the coackatrice, the rarest bird in the land. Chat away with it for a while, until your luggage drops on its head. Sadly, all that remains of this unique avian is a feather and an egg. Bag 'em! Now go to the edge of the world, hop onto the island there and get yourself a coconut and go back to the City. Once there, travel to the Unseen University, entering via the kitchen where a bag of flour has been left conveniently for you. Take that and go to the Library where you can use L-Space to go back to the night before. Once there, head back to the Fishmonger's stall and go into the alley. Open the loo door and read the graffiti about Big Sally. Okay, so it might seem a bit cryptic, but it is important. Go back through L-Space and once in the present, head for the Patrician's Palace. Again the card trick is a useful way of distracting the guards and queue up to see the Patrician. Ask him about the thief who was here earlier and he suggests you go to The Shades. So it's back through L-Space to find the ladies who work the night, as it were, around the Shades. You'll soon find Big Sally and follow the instructions given in the loo. Sally wants three ingredients, which you have, so give them to her and she'll take you to the cathouse where you'll get what you need – her knickers. Nip back through L-Space to visit the Street Urchin and show him the knickers – and he'll be convinced you're a real man!



E How do I get the Stonemason's Golden Trowel?

Quite simple really. Now that the Street Urchin is on your side, he teaches you the odd handshake. You need to practise it a while to get it right – there are three old geezers ready to watch you – and then head back to The Shades. The Stonemason is there, repairing

the damage made by the Dragon at the very beginning of the game. Use your handshake on him and during the exchange, you give him the knickers and take his trowel. He seems strangely happy with his new item of clothing . . .



G How do I steal the Fishmonger's Golden Belt Buckle?

All you need to do is create a trap for the Fishmonger, but this is possibly the longest and most torturous set of events you have done so far. First off, you need an octopus (of course!). He sits next to the Fishmonger's stall but being a bit of a slippery customer, he decides the inside of your inventory luggage is not too appealing. Nevertheless, use your string to tie his legs together and pop him in. Next up, you need Nanny Ogg's Love Potion but to get that you need Igneous the Troll's Clay Pot, and that's only accessible by going back in time (via the Unseen University and using L-Space of course). Once back in the street at night, pop along to the Troll's shop and, once he's distracted by his latest pot, you can nick the one he's left lying about.

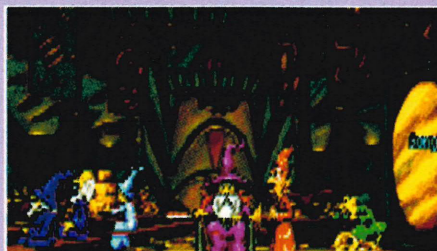
Now pop back to the future (or the present, depending on how you view these things) and head for the City gates. Go outside and head for the Ramtop mountains again and enter the appropriately named Dark Wood. Take the right forks and eventually you'll come across Nanny Ogg's cottage. Once inside use the Troll's Clay Pot to steal some of her amazing Love Potion (custard again – all the women here seem to find custard a turn on) and head back to

the City.

Once back there it's another trip through L-Space and off to the Broken Drum inn, although now it's just known as The Drum. Upset someone's glass, and therefore start a fight. As this goes on, use your ladder to steal the drumstick from the inn sign. In doing so, by the way, the sign is damaged, hence the name-change in the future. Dash back to the Unseen University, through L-Space and return to the present. Or future. Or whatever. Head for the University dining room and use the drumstick to sound the dinner gong. Watch for the Apprentice Wizard by the fish pond, and when he gets up and goes, he leaves his bag of fruit behind. These are prunes and once you've put them into your luggage, you are now ready to get the Fishmonger's Golden Belt Buckle. Honest. Head for his stall and the nearby toilet. Place the custard Love Potion inside the toilet and dump your Octopus in as well, and then go out and shut the door. All you have to do now is make the Fishmonger eat too many prunes and when he dashes off to the loo, he'll get molested by the love-sick octopus. Once that is done, stick your hand under the toilet door and you should be able to remove

the Golden Belt Buckle, if you're careful.

You have now obtained all the Golden objects from the Brotherhood and all you have to do before ending Act II is to give them to the Dragon.





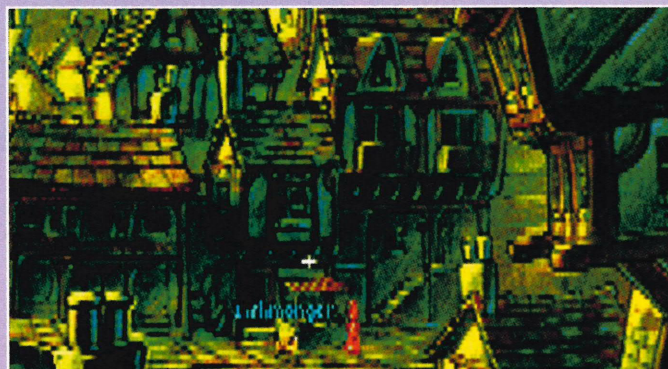
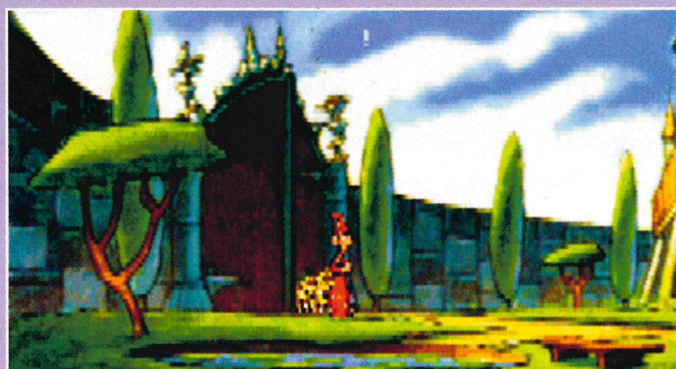
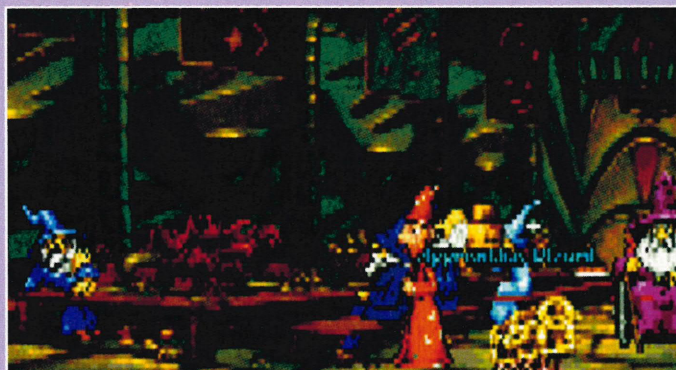
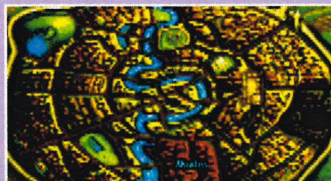
F

How do I get the Golden Key?

Now is your chance to encounter the man responsible for so much trouble – the Thief. You need the key he uses to break in to everybody's houses. The Thief is also in The Shades so all you need to do is find the

house where someone is sleeping. There's a gap between the path and the house so you'll need to get across – use the bra of all things to deaden the noise you're making with the ladder. Once you get inside, you'll

see the key beside the sleeping Thief. However, if you try to get it, he rolls over. Use the cockatrice feather on his feet and he'll go the other way and you've got the key. Simple, eh?

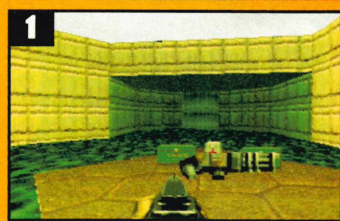


Doom

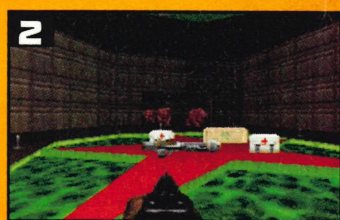
SECRET LEVEL 1 THE MILITARY BASE CODE: P7WTK!GF 12

WHERE TO FIND IT

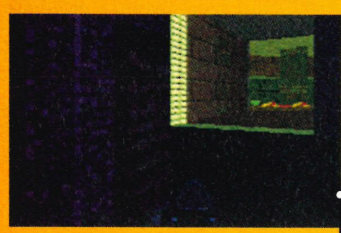
Enter the Toxin Refinery (Level 3) and shotgun the soldiers patrolling the opening chamber. Run through the grey door on the left, up the steps and down into the small room on the left. Hit the switch hidden in the corner, leave via the stairs and walk back to the right, into the newly-opened corridor. In the darkness, run around to the right and onto the platform on the far wall – take too long and the ledge will raise, so be quick. Take out the zombies, grab the rocket launcher and nip through the tunnel on the right, across the green acid. Flick the switch before turning around and returning to the opening chamber. A concrete bridge now stretches across the acid pit – run to the other side, along the corridor and eliminate the zombies lying in wait for you. Run to the exit at the back and enter The Military Base.



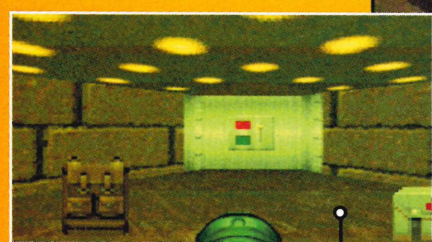
The chain gun is hidden away and can only be reached by two elevators that drops from these two locations.



Grabbing the hefty rocket launcher from the centre of the star unleashes hordes of Bull Demons so make sure you've got the shotgun ready.



INSIDE THE DARKNESS, A SECRET OPENING IS REVEALED.



HIT THIS SWITCH TO RAISE THE LEDGE LEADING TO THE EXIT.

CHEAT MODES

Id have incorporated a number of cheats into the *Doom* code, but getting them to work is a very hit or miss affair.

If you can't get them to work immediately, re-pause the game and start again as some don't seem to like working in conjunction with others. To effect the following, just pause the game and press the following in the given order:

UNLIMITED HEALTH

Down, L2, ■, R1, Right, L1, Left, ●

ALL MAPS, ALL OBJECTS

▲, ▲, L2, R2, Right, ●

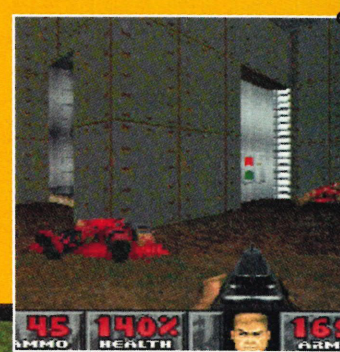
LEVEL WARP

Right, Left, R2, R1, ▲, L1, ●, X

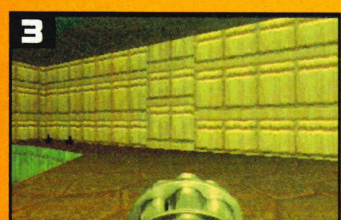
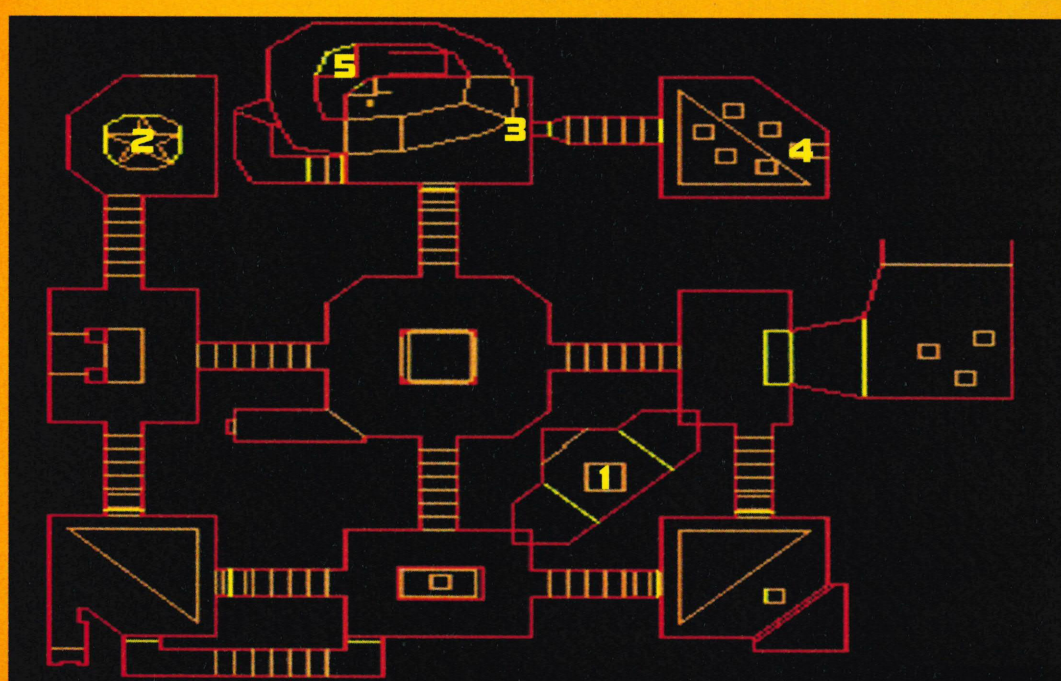


WATCH OUT FOR THE IMPs AND ZOMBIES INSIDE THIS CORRIDOR.

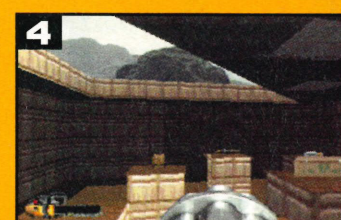
THIS SWITCH OPENS THE DOOR LEADING TO THE DARK HALL.



THE ROCKET LAUNCHER CHAMBER IS PLAGUED BY FIRE-BALL-SPITTING IMPs.



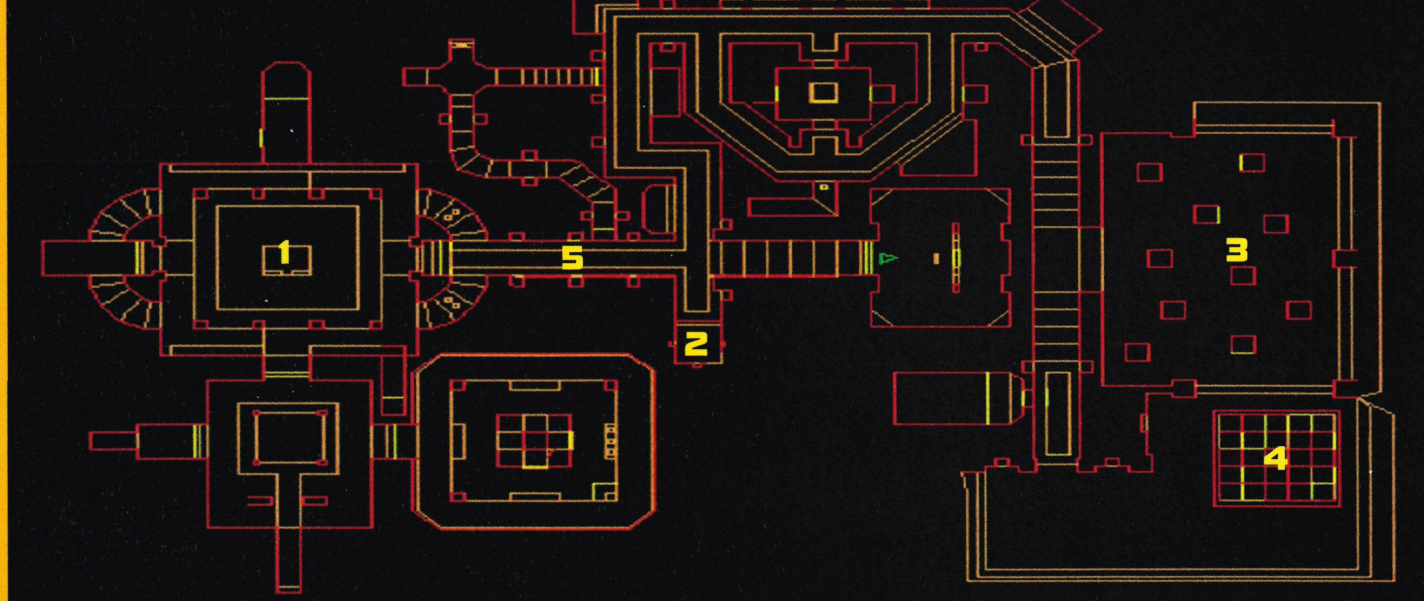
Look carefully at the wall on the right, near the exit – you'll see a secret door which, when opened, leads to a handy hidden chamber.



The ledge lowers as you enter the room so run across to climb on it. To get the various items on top of the pillars, run around each of them in turn.



To reach the exit, drop down into the acid pit and run quickly around to the switch. Yank the lever to raise a ledge that leads to the exit.



SECRET LEVEL

2

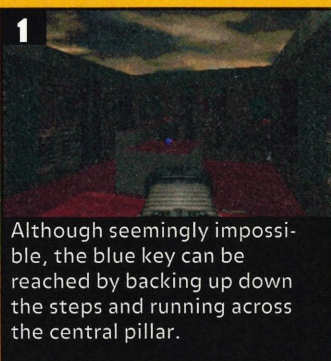
THE MANSION

CODE: HYKB63X333

WHERE TO FIND IT

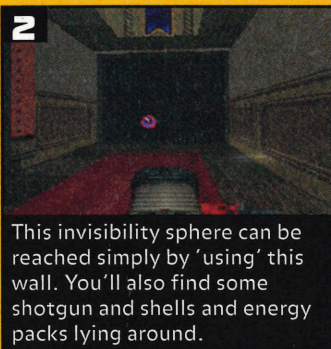
Skip to the Suburbs (Level 44). Exit the building through the ground level door and run around to the left. Run through the hole in the black wall and off to the right, heading towards the square red building. Enter through the door nearest the perimeter wall and hit the use button to lower the platform on the right. Take out the Revenants waiting at the top, taking care to dodge their homing missiles. Jump into the acid pit and flick the switch, nipping into the room with the BFG. Pick up the gun then hit the use button on the skull wall near the back – you are now entering The Mansion.

1



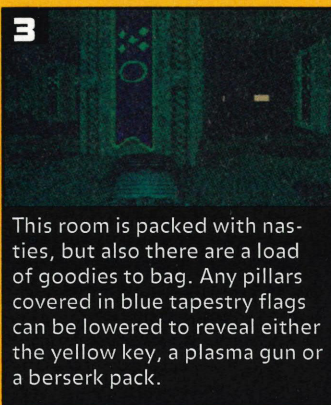
Although seemingly impossible, the blue key can be reached by backing up down the steps and running across the central pillar.

2

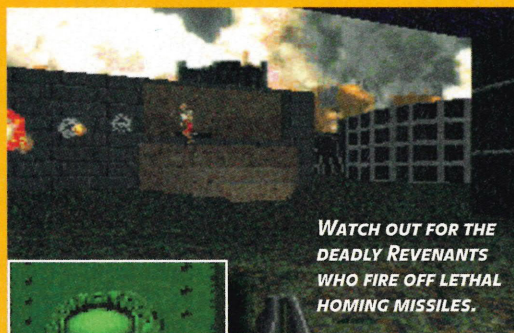


This invisibility sphere can be reached simply by 'using' this wall. You'll also find some shotgun and shells and energy packs lying around.

3



This room is packed with nasties, but also there are a load of goodies to bag. Any pillars covered in blue tapestry flags can be lowered to reveal either the yellow key, a plasma gun or a berserk pack.



WATCH OUT FOR THE DEADLY REVENANTS WHO FIRE OFF LETHAL HOMING MISSILES.

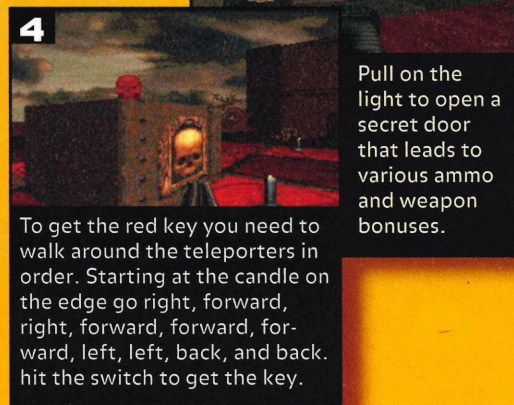
BY HITTING THE GREEN SWITCH IN THE ACID PIT YOU CAN OPEN THE BGF CHAMBER AND REVEAL THE SECRET EXIT.

DON'T BE FOOLED BY THIS ILLUSION – IT IS THE ENTRANCE TO THE BUILDING.

5



4



To get the red key you need to walk around the teleporters in order. Starting at the candle on the edge go right, forward, right, forward, forward, forward, left, left, back, and back. hit the switch to get the key.

Pull on the light to open a secret door that leads to various ammo and weapon bonuses.

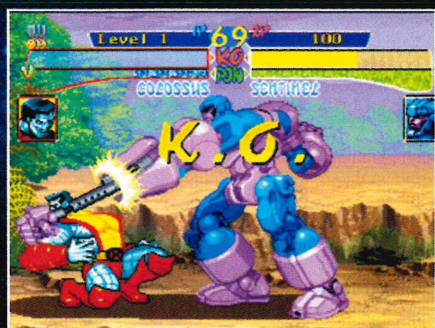
PASSWORDS

The following passwords allow the user full access to any of the levels on the basic set-up level. Please note the codes vary depending on the weaponry a player takes into a new stage.

STAGE: NAME:

CODE

2	PLANT	Z80CH02R20
3	TOXIN REFINERY	T0Q1NNHMQS
4	COMMAND CONTROL	8Z4MT2Z18!
5	PHOBOS LAB	0QWCK!GB02
6	CENTRAL PROCESSING	PFS7SGXPML
7	COMPUTER STATION	LVR765TSMP
8	PHOBOS ANOMALY	LKNZ78K45Q
9	DEIMOS ANOMALY	G6J3VWGDDB
10	CONTAINMENT AREA	9V0FPS3746
11	REFINERY	2M7NZT10VX
12	DEIMOS LAB	DT57Q33CJG
13	COMMAND CENTRE	C74!2FPCHK
14	HALLS OF THE DAMNED	!YJNLVXV53
15	SPAWNING VATS	D962MM2BKH
16	HELLGATE	DCZ4DJBDLN
17	HELLKEEP	FV056FBRMP
18	PANDEMONIUM	Q560RRTGKH
19	HOUSE OF PAIN	H2X45BJ!SQ
20	UNHOLY CATHEDRAL	56SD97NZWV
21	MT. EREBUS	G0V39PQSSS
22	LIMBO	NN!1WMYDBC
23	TOWER OF BABEL	M47ZXXPVFD
24	HELL BENEATH	KB086S!QMP
25	PERFECT HATRED	0DKPM7P834
26	SEVER THE WICKED	!4QDDTB0VX
27	UNRULY EVIL	!M0KD3YGVX
28	UNTO THE CRUEL	1YJLL55453
29	TWILIGHT DESCENDS	F1Y68FMHTR
30	THRESHOLD OF PAIN	PT50ZG!DJG
31	ENTRYWAY	P!52ZCJQJG
32	UNDERHALLS	ZT5VZCSQJG
33	THE GAUNTLET	PBGQP9W946
34	THE FOCUS	Q1DHYZ!5!8
35	THE WASTE TUNNELS	JQLYK90Z02
36	THE CRUSHER	T1DHRRTS!8
37	DEAD SIMPLE	DPTLBB6KXV
38	TRICKS AND TRAPS	XN94WWOMFC
39	THE PIT	4W0X5J!SPN
40	REFUELLING BASE	N0CJ758P79
41	O OF DESTRUCTION	TBGR4FMQ46
42	THE FACTORY	WT67ZZ!BJG
43	THE INNERMOST DENS	!W0XGJLLPN
44	SUBURBS	6JX5M4JQTR
45	TENEMENTS	RBGF2F3!46
46	THE COURTYARD	H4RGDDCKYX
47	THE CITADEL	Y!67NQLBHG
48	NIRVANA	L6TL3Z70WV
49	THE CATACOMBS	548ZBDLBBD
50	BARRELS OF FUN	9Q3YCT0GJK
51	BLOODFALLS	HKFNV80R97
52	ABANDONED MINES	6N94WQPFFC
53	MONSTER CONDO	6594WGYBBC
54	REDEMPTION DENIED	7Q3!21YFJK



THE X FILES

When the first issue of *Uncanny X-Men* was published in 1963, it wasn't particularly popular. In fact, the comic was shelved after just over forty issues. A series of twenty reprints followed later on, but it wasn't until the appearance of *Giant Sized X-Men* in 1975, which introduced new superheroes like Storm, Colossus and, of course, Wolverine, that the series became popular. Now, thirty years on, the X-Men comic is sold worldwide and if you want to buy a copy of the first issue, it will set you back a cool \$4800!

The X-Men sensation isn't restricted to comics either, with a cartoon series already aired on terrestrial television and loads of merchandising, from plastic action figures to full-size cardboard cut-outs of your favourite hero.

Now Acclaim has secured the rights to publish games based any of the Marvel comic characters. *Iron Man* and *The Fantastic Four* have already been confirmed for a PlayStation release, along with a conversion of Capcom's brilliant *Marvel Super Heroes* coin-op, but the first to appear is *X-Men: Children of the Atom*.

It's the first game born from a collaboration between comic superheroes creator Marvel and premier software developers Capcom, a dream team which proved unbeatable when the coin-op was released in the arcades back in 1994.

Capcom's beat 'em up expertise combined with some of the most striking characters in comic book history proved explosive, even though it was a risk for both parties involved.

Creating a game around heroes as established as the X-Men was a difficult task, and ensuring each fighter moved in character and remained authentic to the Marvel originals was essential. After all, if Wolverine's claws were slightly too long or Cyclops' visor was the wrong shade of red, die-hard X-Men fans across the globe would be in uproar.

Thankfully Capcom look to have pulled off the perfect conversion with ease, and after a load of frankly awful Marvel games (from Scott Adams' archaic text adventures featuring *The Fantastic Four* to US Gold's atrocious *Incredible Hulk* platformer) at last the X-Men license is done justice. *PlayStation Plus* takes the first look at Capcom's staggering coin-op conversion and explores phenomenon surrounding Marvel and the *Uncanny X-Men*.

CYCLOPS



Real Name: Scott Summers
Origin: Alaska
First Appearance: *Uncanny X-Men* #1

Although Summers is regarded as the first X-Man, his wife, Jean Grey (AKA Phoenix), was actually Professor Xavier's first student. The eldest son of Anne and Christopher Summers, Scott and younger brother Alex (who later became Havok of X-Factor fame) were separated from their parents at an early age, when aliens attacked their aircraft. Bailing out of the plane using a parachute, the two kids were eventually taken under the wing of Professor X. Anne Summers was murdered by the aliens (although her name lives on thanks to the chain of seedy sex stores selling crotchless knickers and the like) but Christopher managed to escape, and now plagues the space ways as space pirate Corsair.

Trained by Professor X to utilise the full potential of his mutants powers, Cyclops wears ruby quartz glasses to hold back the lethal force of his optic blast.

Cyclops' special moves include the Gene Splice and the Mega Optic Blast, a smart finishing move that pulverises his enemy in a brilliant flash of bright light.



CYCLOPS' MEGA OPTIC BLAST IS ONE OF THE BEST SPECIAL MOVES.



ou'd be forgiven for thinking Capcom has simply reverted to the same tired old formula with *X-Men: Children of the Atom*. After all, the gameplay is very similar indeed to *Street Fighter Alpha* and surely the only difference the game has to offer is a load of new characters to fight with, yes? No. Admittedly *X-Men* is based on the classic *Street Fighter* game design (it was even designed by the same team responsible for the ground-breaking *Street Fighter II*), but then why change tried and tested formula that works so well? Instead Capcom has taken the basic *Street Fighter* skeleton and has moulded on new gameplay elements as well as introducing 12 new fighters.

As a result *X-Men: Children of the Atom* is arguably Capcom's finest one-on-one punch-fest to date, and takes the 2D beat 'em up to new heights with its advanced gameplay mechanics and striking visual edge.

The PlayStation version, which is due for release some time during the summer, promises to be an arcade perfect conversion, much like *Street fighter Alpha*. Certainly, all the X-Men heroes and villains will appear, along with their dazzling array of special moves and super attacks. The game will be just as super-fast too, according to Acclaim, and will offer the same frantic one-on-one beat 'em up action of it's arcade parent. Fingers crossed, then.



THE VECTOR THEORY

One of *X-Men: Children of the Atom*'s most innovative features is Capcom's Vector Theory. This allows fighters to fire projectile attacks in virtually any direction just by using the different strength punch and kick buttons. For example, Cyclops fires off a low Optic Blast by using the weak punch, while a head-height attack is executed using the medium-strength punch. To counter-attack enemies jumping into combat, fire off a high Optic Blast using the hard punch.



PROJECTILE ATTACKS CAN BE DIRECTED USING DIFFERENT PUNCH BUTTONS.



OMEGA RED



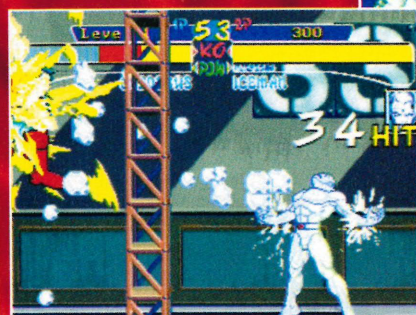
Omega Red is another of Wolverine's arch enemies, and was developed as part of Russia's war project to create the ultimate soldier. Equipped with lethal carbonadium coils that can lash an opponent to death from across the screen, Omega Red's body is riddled with disease and unless he can pass on the virus by killing an opponent, his body enters a comatose state until the risk of deadly infection is minimised. Omega Red can strike out with his coils in any direction, making him one of the game's most powerful fighters. Combined with the devastating Omega Destroyer finishing move, this Russian reaper is truly a formidable opponent.



Real Name: Arkady Russovich
Origin: Russia
First Appearance: *X-Men* #4

KILLER COMBOS

As well as loads of outrageous specials moves, the X-Men are capable of performing some of the most staggering combos ever seen in a beat 'em up. While twenty hit combos are quite common, apparently Iceman can pull off a blinding eighty-hit attack! Blimey!



TO THE POWER OF X

Below each fighter's energy bar is their X-Power gauge, which gradually increases with each special move performed. As it builds up, more mutant powers become available. Muster up enough energy to reach a first level attack and

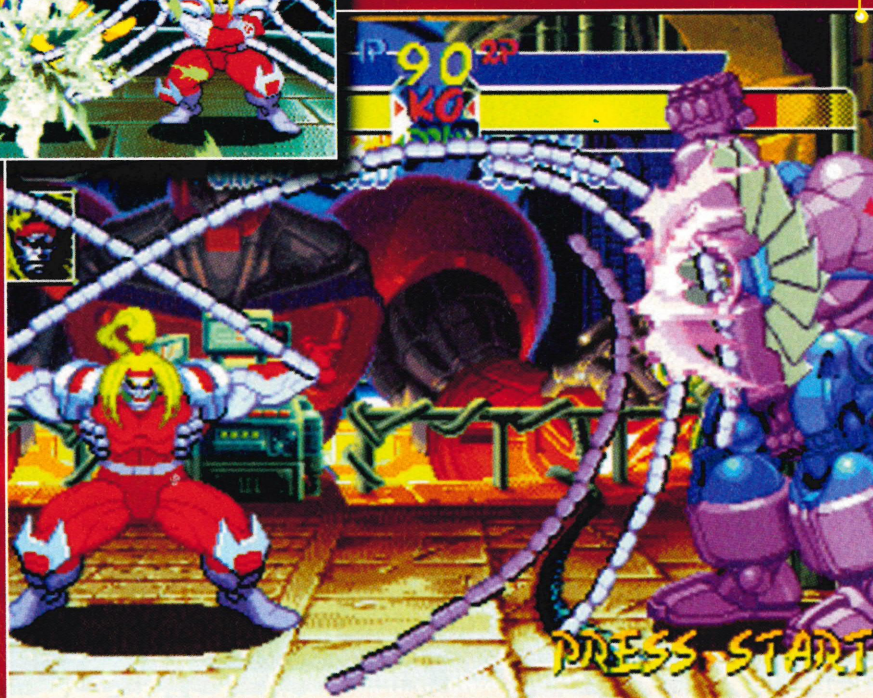
the difference is hardly noticeable. A level two strike is more powerful still but the max-power attacks are awesome, ripping through its opponent with ease.



CHARGE UP ENOUGH X-POWER AND SOME SPECTACULAR MOVES BECOME AVAILABLE.



OMEGA RED'S DEVASTATING OMEGA DESTROYER SPECIAL ATTACK IS A PRIME EXAMPLE OF X-MEN'S VISUALLY AWESOME FINISH MOVES.

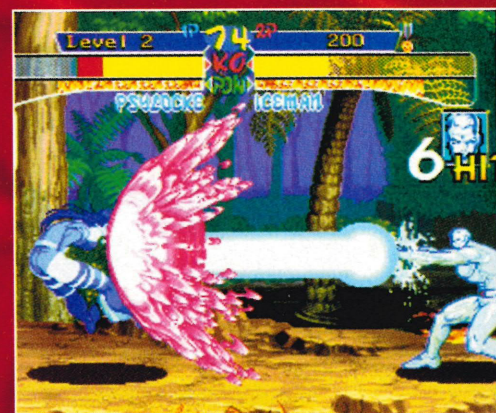


ICEMAN



Real Name: Robert 'Bobby' Drake
Origin: Long Island, New York
First Appearance: *Uncanny X-Men* #1

Even though Iceman is the comedian of the X-Men, he's still a fearsome fighter. Feeling that he was taken less seriously by other team members, Iceman left the X-Men to form fellow super hero group The Champions, before joining X-Factor and eventually returning to the X-Men. Thanks to his extensive array of special moves Iceman rarely has to rely on conventional attacks like punches and kicks, and can instead freeze enemies with an Ice Blast or crush them under an Arctic Avalanche.



FAT BLOKE
JUGGERNAUT IS CRUSHED BY ICEMAN'S ARCTIC AVALANCHE.



COLOSSUS



Real Name: Piotr 'Peter' Nikolaievitch Rasputin

Origin: Siberia

First Appearance: Giant Size X-Men #1

Peter Rasputin discovered his mutant ability to change his body into organic steel when working as a farm labourer in Russia. Recruited by Professor Xavier, along with Storm and Wolverine, to investigate the disappearance of the original X-Men team, Colossus eventually left the super hero group after sacrificing his principles over the years of his loyal service. His tough armoured shell makes Colossus a terrifying foe capable of crushing enemies with his bare fists.



COLOSSUS' BACK
OPENS UP AND A
HUGE CANNON
POPS OUT. EEK!



FIGHTING FOR BEGINNERS

Like *Street Fighter Alpha*, *X-Men: Children of the Atom* features a beginner mode that makes it slightly easier for novice fighters. Selecting the wimp-out mode enables the auto-block, which can absorb eight hits so the fighter sustain very little damage at all. Super special moves are also much easier to pull off, so now you don't need double-jointed fingers to defeat the enemy with style.



X MARKS THE SPOT

Each of the X-Men fights on home turf, from the Silver Samurai's shrine in Osaka to the Savage Land where Wolverine sometimes resides. Like the X-Men themselves, each location has been faithfully recreated from the comic books. Cyclops' home stage, the Danger Room, is one of the most impressive in the game and those familiar with the X-Men will recognise the setting from Professor Xavier's mansion. Created using Shi'ar alien technology, the room can simulate any environment, so as each bout ensues the background morphs from one location to the next, with spikes sprouting from the ground and other obstacles flying across the room. Thankfully they're only aesthetic, and don't actually damage the X-Men while they're fighting!



THE SENTINAL'S HOME TURF IS
INSIDE THE FACTORY IN GENOSHA.

WOLVERINE



Real Name: Logan

Origin: Canada

First Appearance: Incredible Hulk #180

Logan's mind was wiped by the scientists who gave him his adamantium skeleton, deleting any memories of working as a CIA agent alongside Sabretooth (now his arch-rival) and Maverick. Wolverine's natural mutant abilities gives him enhanced animal senses, great strength and agility and also the ability to heal himself within minutes. Although somewhat short of special moves, Wolverine's mastery of martial arts, combined with his natural ferocity, enables him to string together awesome combos like the vicious Berserker Barrage and Tornado Claw.



SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Alongside the de rigueur tournament and verses modes, X-Men also includes options for Group Battle and Survival fights. Two players each select a team of mutants for the Group Battle, the winner of the match determined through a series of elimination bouts. The survival

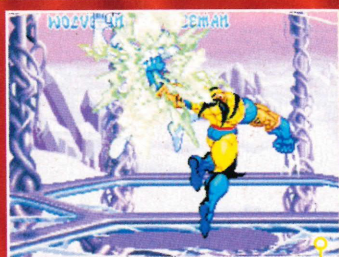
fight is a one-player option that pits you against all of the other fighters in the game. However, each round lasts for one bout and rather than energy being restored at the end of the fight, you're only granted a health top-up if you performed admirably in the last scrap.



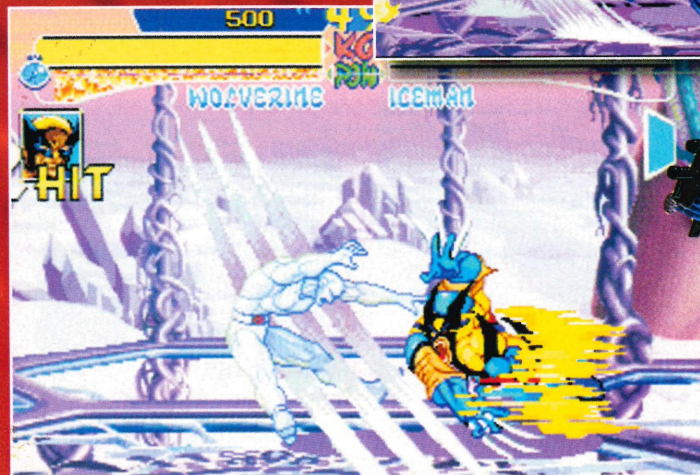
AKUMA FIGHTS STORM ON TOP OF A BLACKBIRD PLANE.



THE DANGER ROOM CHANGES AS THE BOUT ENSUES.



WOLVERINE'S TORNADO CLAW IS SIMILAR TO RYU'S DRAGON PUNCH.



SILVER SAMURAI



Real Name: Kenuchiro Harada

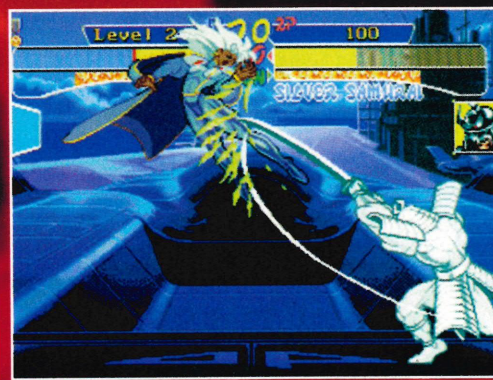
Origin: Japan

First Appearance: New Mutants #5

The Silver Samurai is surprisingly agile for a warrior of such build, attacking gracefully with his razor-sharp sword. Interestingly, Harada can channel mutants powers into his Samurai blade, engulfing it in raging flames to cause extra damage or, for long range attacks, to spit out lightning bolts. Additionally, the Silver Samurai's X-Power attacks include lobbing massive shuriken throwing star across the screen, or calling upon the sacred power of Rai Mei Ken, which summons a blinding thunder shower that saps away at the enemy's energy bar.



SILVER SAMURAI'S SHURIKEN IS EXECUTED IN THE SAME WAY AS RYU'S FIREBALL.



PSYLOCKE



Real Name: Elisabeth 'Betsy' Braddock
Origin: Malden, England
First Appearance: Captain Britain #9

Psylocke's powers are primarily telepathic so Braddock is capable of firing off psychic blasts that can fry an opponent's brain in seconds. Psylocke's appearance, and indeed her powers, changed when her mind was combined with the ninjitsu skills of warrior Kwannon. Now she's blessed with impressive martial arts attacks as well as psychic blows, with awesome punch and kick combos complementing powerful psi blasts.



PSYLOCKE MAY ONLY BE A GIRL BUT SHE'S STILL A PRETTY TOUGH FIGHTER.



ACCLAIM GO MARVEL MAD

As part of the deal with Marvel, Acclaim already has a further two superhero games in the pipeline. Although details are sketchy at the moment, Iron Man will apparently be a *Final Fight*-style beat 'em up with ol' rust bucket battling it out against his arch enemy, the Mandarin. Also due is a game based on Marvel's ever-popular quartet, the Fantastic Four, but as yet very little is known. We'll keep you updated when we receive more details.

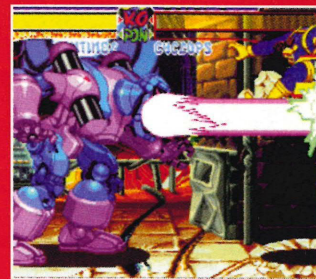
IRON MAN IS JUST ONE OF THE SUPERHEROES TO FEATURE IN ACCLAIM'S MARVEL CONVERSIONS.



SENTINEL



The Sentinels are fearsome combat droids created by anti-mutant terrorist Boliver Trask, and pose one of the biggest threats the X-Men have faced since the team formed many years ago. Countless models have seen service but the X-Men now face a new threat, a new class of droid designed to counter each of the X-Men's mutant powers. As a result this Sentinel has a vast array of attacks, from rocket punches to a hefty body press. Most impressive of all is its Plasma Storm X-Attack.



Real Name: N/A
Origin: Genosha
First Appearance: Uncanny X-Men #14

A SENTINEL UNLEASHES PHOTON DEATH FROM ITS MECHANICAL JAWS.

ESSENTIAL READING

A variety of comics and graphic novels abound concerning the adventures of the colourful characters who inhabit the Marvel Universe.

To learn more about the earliest incarnation of the X-Men, pick up a copy of *Marvel Masterworks: The X-Men*. Various volumes are available, each chronicling their battles against Magneto, the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants and the Mimic, among others. *Marvel Masterworks* also exist for other Marvel characters, including The Fantastic Four, The Avengers, The Hulk, Doctor Strange, Daredevil, Spider-Man et al.

Marvels is possibly the best ever graphic novel put out by the company. It tells the story of a newspaper photographer obsessed with superheroes, and begins during World War II, going right up to the Vietnam War of the late Sixties. A unique spin is put on the adventures by means of re-telling them via a 'Joe Average' perspective. Beautifully written and wonderfully painted.

The Very Best of Marvel Comics is a pot pourri of Sixties adventures featuring various famous creations, such as Thor, The X-Men, Doctor Strange, etc. The best of the bunch is *This Man, This Monster*, possibly the greatest Fantastic Four story, written by Stan Lee and drawn by Jack Kirby, the two men responsible for making Marvel successful during the Sixties.

Weapon X, written and drawn by Barry Windsor-Smith, finally reveals aspects of Wolverine's origins, showing how the adamantium was grafted to his skeleton and the claws embedded in his hands to provide some shady Government types with the ultimate killing machine. Needless to say, no-one asked Wolvie's permission...

All these titles are published by Boxtree Books at varying prices.



SPIRAL



Real Name: 'Ricochet' Rita
Origin: Earth; augmented on Mojo World
First Appearance: Longshot Limited Series #3

Other-dimensional being Mojo created Spiral, using the body of former television stuntwoman 'Ricochet' Rita, to increase his television ratings by fighting it out with the X-Men. Like Omega Red, she was designed to be the ultimate warrior. Her six arms allows her to manipulate different weapons with surprising dexterity, and also she has the ability to warp through time and space, teleporting behind her opponent whenever she choose. Better still, Spiral's dramatic finishing move, metamorphosis, in which she changes into each character in the game before attacking, is one of the most impressive in the game.



SPIRAL'S MANY BLADE ATTACKS ARE EXTREMELY VERSATILE.



Oof! Cyclops GOES FLYING AS A SENTINEL PUTS THE BOOT IN.

STORM



Real Name: Ororo Munro

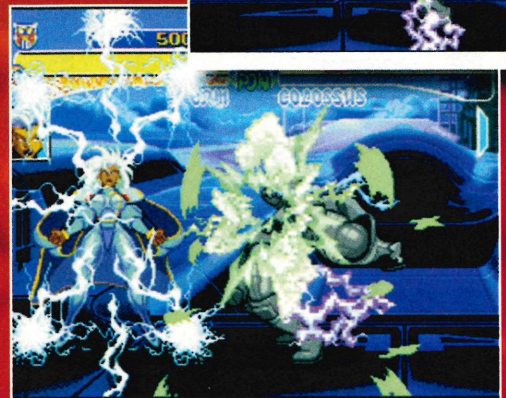
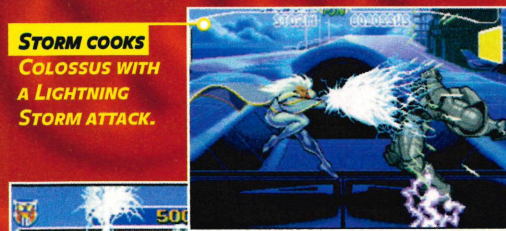
Origin: New York

First Appearance: Giant Size X-MEN #1

Before discovering her mutant powers Storm lived as an African Goddess, controlling the weather for the native farmers of Kenya. Now she's one of the most established heroes of the X-Men, using her powers to manipulate atmospheric conditions against her foes. Lightning attacks will shock the enemy but casting a typhoon across the screen stuns them temporarily. Storm has two awesome X-Attacks, namely the Lightning Storm and the Hail Storm.



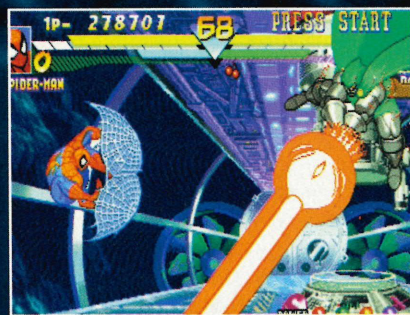
STORM COOKS COLOSSUS WITH A LIGHTNING STORM ATTACK.



MARVEL SUPER HEROES

X-Men: Children of the Atom is the first Marvel beat 'em up to be converted to the PlayStation but a version of the current coin-op smash, *Marvel Super Heroes*, is planned for 1997. Similar in many ways to *X-Men*, Capcom wanted to include some of Marvel's more popular characters therefore have introduced a load on new fighters, including The Incredible Hulk, Doctor Doom, Captain America and Spider-Man. As well as new fighters to choose from, one of the most apparent features *Marvel Super Heroes* offers over *X-Men* is the inclusion of the Infinity Gems. In the comic books these gems were sought after by just about everyone as they give the bearer supreme powers. For example, grab the Power Gem and your fighter will attack with more force. Pick up the Soul Gem and your energy bar will be topped up. *Marvel Super Heroes* also includes counter-attacks which are also used to great effect in *Street Fighter Alpha*. By performing a simple Infinity Counter it's possible to turn a special attack against it's attacker, although it's only really effective against the slower characters in the game.

A few familiar faces from *X-Men: Children of the Atom* also feature in *Marvel Super Heroes*, with Wolverine, Psylocke, Magneto and Juggernaut



returning to the ring for the second time. They boast a selection of new special moves too, from Psylocke's cool Butterfly Cloak X-Power to the Weapon X finishing move of Wolverine.

Although Capcom has confirmed a PlayStation version of *Marvel Super Heroes* is in development, the game has yet to be signed by a UK publisher. So, as it is not due for release until next year, for the time being, you'll have to keep pumping coins into the smart arcade game.



JUGGERNAUT

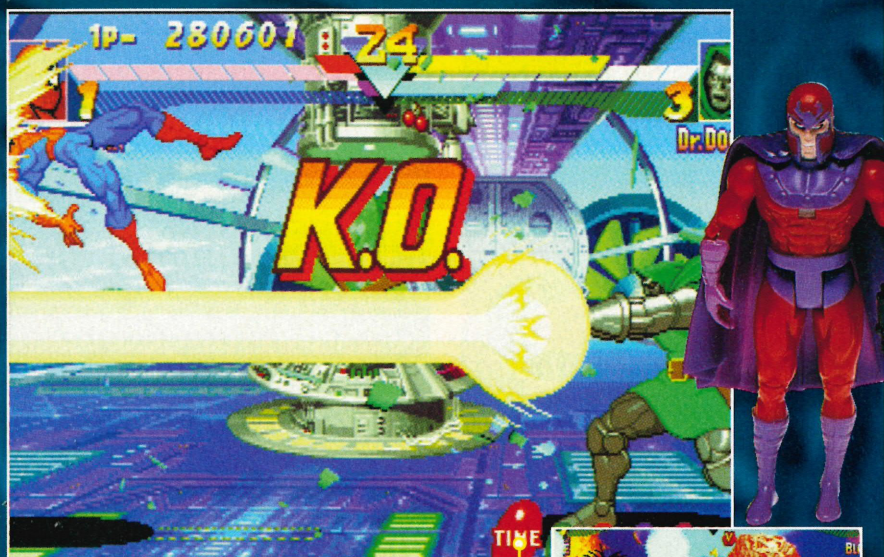


Although Juggernaut is the half-brother of Professor Charles Xavier, mentor of the X-Men, he wasn't born a mutant. His incredible powers were gained from grabbing the crimson ruby of Cyttorak, which transformed him into giant-sized meathead capable of crushing enemies in his over-sized fists.

While his immense size can be advantageous, it also has its drawbacks. Juggernaut is one of the slowest characters in the game, and as a result can be easily taken down by Cyclops. Watch out for his deadly Juggernaut Headcrush though – it will leave you with one migraine you'll never forget!



Real Name: Kane Marko
Origin: Berkeley, California
First Appearance: Uncanny X-Men #12



SPIDEY IS KO'D BY DR DOOM'S AWESOME FINISHING MOVE.

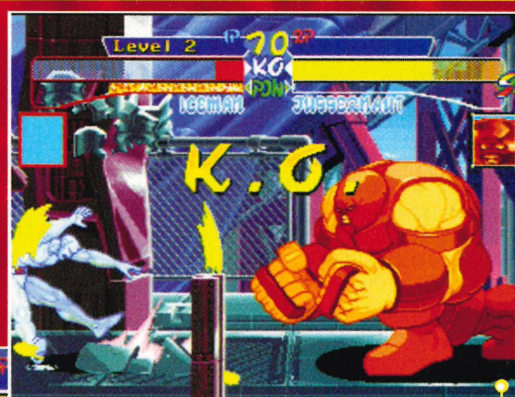


CAPTAIN AMERICA BATTLES IT OUT WITH FAT FELLA THANOS.

OLD ENEMIES SPIDER-MAN AND DR DOOM MEET UP IN THE BRILLIANT MARVEL SUPER HEROES.



JUGGERNAUT - TOO MANY CREAM CAKES, PERHAPS?



WITH FISTS THE SIZE OF BREEZE BLOCKS, JUGGERNAUT IS A DANGEROUS OPPONENT.



EVEN ICEMAN'S FROZEN SHIELD ISN'T ENOUGH TO PROTECT HIM AGAINST THE SHEER BRUTE FORCE OF JUGGERNAUT'S POWER PUNCH. MAYBE THROWING MARS BARS ON THE GROUND WILL CALM HIM DOWN?

MAGNETO



Real Name: Eric Magnus Lansherr
Origin: Unspecified, probably Northern Europe
First Appearance: Uncanny X-Men #1

Magneto is the X-Men's most feared enemy, and has plagued the super hero mutants since they first formed back in 1963. Appearing in the game as the final challenge, Magneto, alias Eric Lansherr, has the ability to manipulate magnetic force, to the extent of moulding metal objects into any form he desires. Watch out for the deadly magnetic bolts he throws, and also the powerful force shield he creates to protect against any incoming attacks.



MAGNETO IS THE LAST BOSS FIGHTER IN X-MEN, SO HE'S QUITE HARD, REALLY.



PLUS POINTS



Welcome to an expanded instalment of Plus Points. Loads of you have been writing to us, so here's a smattering of your comments, questions and queries.

Send your views and comments to:
Plus Points,
PlayStation Plus,
Priory Court,
30-32 Farringdon Lane,
London,
EC1R 3AU

playstation@cix.compulink.co.uk

EARLY MORNING QUICKIES

Please can you print my letter in your magazine please as this is the first time I have written in?

Matthew Pearce, Birmingham

No, next...

I want to know why, when I bought *Worms*, I got a double CD case but only one CD?

Peter Davis, Kingshurst

Maybe conservation hasn't reached Ocean yet, despite their cute dolphin. Actually, it's probably because the normal sized casings break very easily.

Outstanding mag. Nice reviews. No bullshit. Straight answers. This is what we get from you. Keep it up as the barmaid said to the vicar.

K Tarry, Northampton

Is there any way that I can get my greasy little mitts on Issue 3 of *PlayStation Plus* with the *Doom* CD on the front
Nick Barlow, Stoke

Well, you could try our Back Issues Department. The address is on page 4 of this issue.

I have heard that the Saturn is going to have an add-on which lets you surf the net. I was wondering if an add-on is being made so that the PlayStation can surf the net.

David Harvey, Baddeley Edge

Anyone who uses the phrase "surf the net" does not deserve an answer — which is no, anyway. Twice in the same letter and it ought to be immediate execution. Saddo!

My mate has got this machine that allows him to play PlayStation games on his PC. Is this illegal?

Dave, Herts

Illegal or not, he's a liar. And as for it being legal... Well, even if such a device existed, what do you think?

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED HUMOUR?

We have come up with some ideas for games consoles that would help Sony corner the market. The consoles are aimed at different age groups and people with different lifestyles, so the console name reflects this:

Sony PlayPen for children under 36 months

Sony PlayBus for children between three and five. The PlayBus also has an upgrade for older children named the **Sony Double Decker PlayBus**.

Sony PlaySchool for children who have recently started school.

Sony PlayDoctors & Nurses for 7-13 year olds

Sony PlayWith Yourself for ages 13-16 (also good for those who cannot afford games).

Sony PlayAround "With Your Girlfriend" for fans of Punt and Dennis.

Sony PlayAround with Secretary for middle-aged people. This also has an upgrade known as the **Sony PlayAt Trial Separation from Spouse**.

Sony PlayPast It for those getting a little over the hill.

What do you think?



Richard Stammers and Ashley Price, Lewes

We think the Sussex Downs, combined with too much fresh air is bad for you. By the way, do Punt and Dennis have any fans (apart from the two of you)?

POPULAR QUESTION TIME

WipeOut, *Destruction Derby* and other Psygnosis games are rumoured to be coming out on the Saturn. If so, why are Sony (owners of Psygnosis) giving their main rival the best games around? Have Sony got something up their sleeves like asking for *Sega Rally* and *Virtua Cop* in return?
James, Berkshire

Popular Question of the Month Number One. No, PlayStation owners are not going to get Sega games, because they were developed directly by Sega's arcade division. The Psygnosis games were not developed by SIE but have been licensed out to third parties for development for whatever format those third parties choose, hence the Sega Saturn versions. However, it does seem that all SIE games will be available for the PlayStation a good 12 months before any other format.

I've just heard about the PlayStation 2 & 3 and how Sony are going to make upgrades for the current PlayStation. I've also heard about other new accessories like the keyboard, hard-drive

and modem. It already has a mouse, so does this mean that the PlayStation will become a PC?

Matthew Dorrington, Somewhere on Earth

Any particular part of Earth? Right Popular Question of the Month Number Two. Rumours of a PlayStation 2, 3 or 10,00,000 are greatly exaggerated. One day (but not in the immediate future) Sony will undoubtedly develop something new in the same way Sega developed the Saturn after the Megadrive. But it's a long way off. There are no immediate plans for an upgrade, and we think the idea of a modem has fallen by the wayside, along with plans to make a CD-movie player add-on, although we're wait-

ing for confirmation on that last one. And a straight no to a keyboard – what does a games console need one for? – and a hard-drive – it's already got on-board RAM. The reason for the mouse is nothing more sinister than its use in games like *X-COM: Enemy Unknown*.

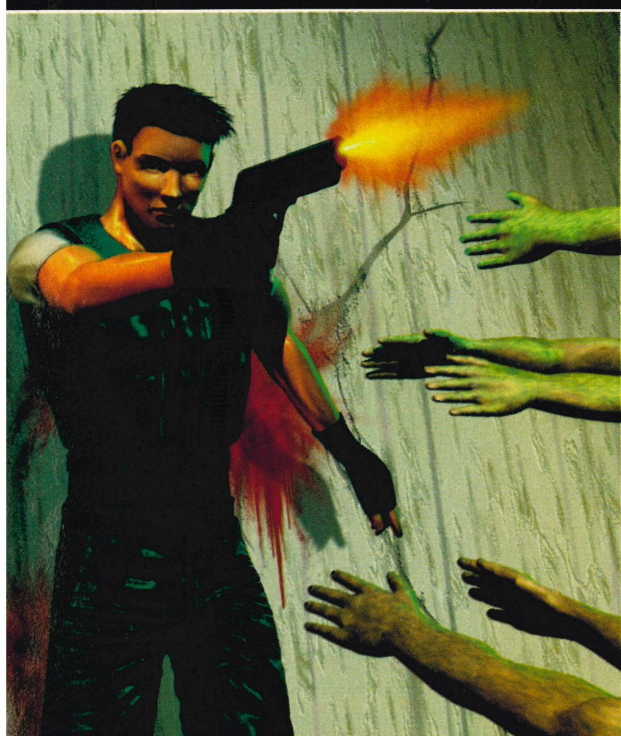
Great reviews, previews and special reports, unlike some mags who employ some tramp off the street to review the games.

After getting my lips around the crappiest game ever, appropriately named *Herbereke Popoitto*, I read in *Plus Points* some of the most



detailed answers I have seen. So here's my question: Being released soon on arcade is *Ultimate Mortal Kombat III* with extra characters, modes etc. Will this be converted to the PlayStation any time soon?

Gary Wenn, Essex



Actually, we found Alex under a soggy cardboard box outside Farringdon tube station! Anyway, our detailed answer to Most Popular Question of the Month Number Three is no. Rather than feed you false hopes with "possibly" or "maybe" or "probably", we'll just be responsible and say absolutely not. Sorry.

OOH OOH OOH THE FUNKY GIBBONS

On reading your magazine I can only conclude that your staff possess all the reviewing capabilities of a lobotomised baboon. The reasons? Your marks and comments for some games are about as accurate as a US pilot and have about as much validity as a Tory manifesto. I shall explain.

For example – *Rayman* – 59%. Did you play it? Are you taking back-handers from Nintendo? It's brilliantly designed, polished to perfection and has a perfect difficulty curve and has one of the finest musical scores ever to grace a game. Even if platform games aren't your thing, to make the comment that it's "a platform game you could have expected on your SNES" shows just how much you guys talk shite.

WipeOut – 94%. *CopOut* more like. Yes, it's flashy but is ultimately short-lived fun. 80% more like it. It's way overrated.

Kileak the Blood – 52%. Okay, it's flawed, but not that flawed. It's essentially a good game.

Loaded – 75%. It deserves a high 80s. Great graphics, sound, over-the-top action etc. It's what video games should be. If you want complex engaging strategy then (A) you are sad and (B) take up chess.

But just to show I'm not working for Nintendo, we do agree on one thing. *Doom* is a damn fine game.

Eddie Smith, Stoke-on-Trent

Well, wouldn't it be boring if we all thought the same things about the same games. Surely the concept behind a review is for the writer to give

his or her personal opinion on what they thought of it. You've seen ours and now we've seen yours. Doesn't make any of us right or wrong, just different. I like letters like this, far more interesting than 'What's your favourite game' and 'Please can you rank *Doom*, *Tekken* and *Johnny Bazookatone*'-type missives.

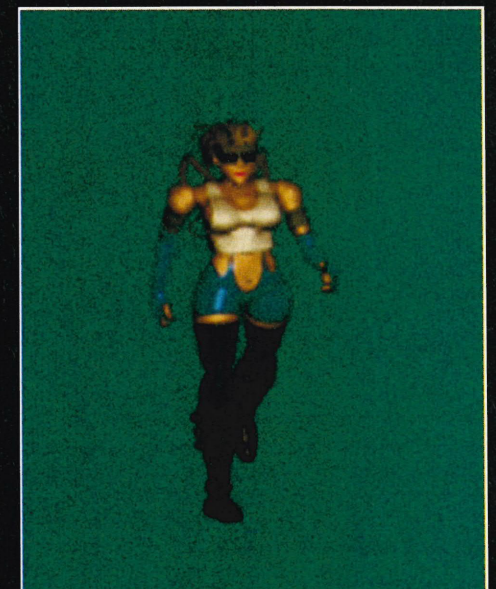
I have looked at other PlayStation magazines but yours is undoubtedly the best, but there are other things you could put in your reviews. Uppers and Downers. You gave *3D Lemmings* a

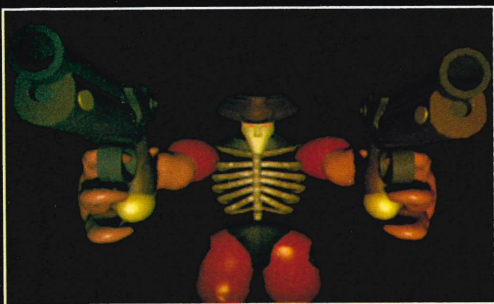


high mark but still said it was a bit messy and left simple folk like me confused. Two things I do like is that you don't put an originality mark in your ratings – who in their right mind would buy a game on originality? The other thing is banning those "my PlayStation is better than your Saturn/Ultra" letters. I really hated those pictures of Sonic killing Mario. But, on the poster front, a poster of Vox from *Loaded* would be nice.

Colin Binthwait, London

You old perv. Okay, here she is!





SCART-OLGY - A DIRTY BUSINESS

I am a proud owner of a PlayStation and *Tekken* and having played it to death, I cannot agree with your recommendation. It's horribly slow when compared to its Japanese counterpart, and it's because of this slowness that the moves and the game itself become boring after a short lifespan.

Why is there such a difference in speed?

Will future games suffer from this disastrous Japan to Europe port-over slow-down?

Stephen Wyley, Bishopstown

Methinks this is one of those occasions where you cannot blame either *Tekken* or the PlayStation but your television. If you connect the Station up via a SCART lead, then the slowness problem should disappear. If your telly hasn't got a SCART socket, you're bugged. C'est la vie.

OUT WITH A BANG

I live in Indonesia but go to school in in Britain. I purchased an NTSC (Jap) PlayStation for Christmas. A Japanese PlayStation runs at 110V and where I live the mains supply is 220V. Nobody told me this and I thought I was just using a Volt Changer Fuse Box. I plugged my PlayStation into the mains until smoke came out of all the vents about three seconds later, so I yanked out the plug. I quickly took the top off my PlayStation and checked the fuse. Nothing was wrong, the fuse said 220V, which seems strange as it was a Japanese machine. Now, my PlayStation is still in perfect working order but does make strange noises when loading games. Could you please diagnose the problem, as I don't want to ruin it.

Mark Owens, Somewhere between Indonesia and England

Well, didn't you have a lucky escape? All instruction manuals warn you about volt-



age changes, and your dealer ought to have as well. I doubt very much that your Station is "in perfect

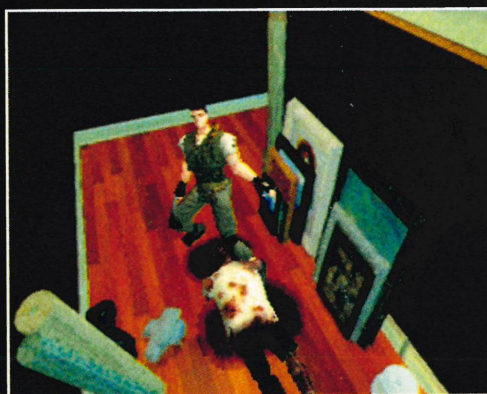
working order" at all. Also, you should never take the top off a PlayStation yourself (something else the instruction manuals specify) not just because it can be dangerous, but because you'll bugger up the terms of your guarantee. Frankly, the safest and wisest course of action would be to take it back to the dealer and ask them or, if that's not possible, find a good electrical shop that deals in Play-Stations and ask them for some help. It might cost you, but it'll probably be cheaper than a new NTSC machine.

TOSH VS TEK

I've had my PlayStation for about three months now, and here are my views. Of course, being my views, they are very important (to me!).

To fly in the face of public opinion, *Toshinden* is better than *Tekken*. I bought *Tekken* with the machine so we've played it. There's a delay when you try to perform some of the moves and trying to get up quickly when you're flat on your back is a pain in the arse. *Toshinden* is more fun and being able to move into the background/foreground adds a dimension that no other beat 'em up offers. Roll on *Toshinden II*.

Pek, Kirkudbright



VIDEO NASTIES?

There are rumours that the PlayStation version of *REsident Evil* could be banned. Is this true?

James Carter, Birmingham

I was reading the article in Issue Four about *Resident Evil* and I was frustrated to see that it might be given an 18 certificate rating. Why don't Virgin give the game a gore code as on the original Megadrive version of *Mortal Kombat*?

David Turner, Chepstow

Funnily enough, we were discussing this in the office just the other day. There seem to be a lot of games that appear to be getting quite gory in their content and those of us who were born in prehistoric times can remember the "video nasties" debate during the early Eighties that had film critics, film buffs, Members of Parliament and dear old Mary Whitehouse getting their respective underwear twisted. Because the powers that be decided that the film industry was not self-regulating enough it imposed ridiculous censorship laws, leading to a host of "banned" movies.

Will the games industry be sensible enough to set up its own system of certification before heavy-handed governmental types decide what is good for us? Do you think such measures are necessary? Do you even care? Go on, let us know.

FAQ

Once again, we address the questions we get asked more than any others..

When is Street Fighter Alpha actually out?

Virgin are currently in possession of the final PAL code, which is being sent to Sony for approval. If all goes well, the game will be out in April.

What has happened to EA's John Madden conversion for the PlayStation?

Sadly, the initial code looked awful, and was basically a basic port from the existing Megadrive code. To their credit, EA have sent this back for redevelopment, and the game should be available during September.

Why do games keep slipping from the release dates printed?

The information we are given is checked before we go to press, but delays in Sony's approval process often means games don't make it on time. When Sony assess a game it is tested for certain hardware specifications and configurations. For example, Gremlin were asked to make any button presses in *Actua* respond with a beep.

Is it possible to play NTSC games on a PAL machine?

It is, but Sony would rather we didn't reveal how. Without being too specific, it involves leaving your CD door open which is less than safe to do. However, Dattel are putting the finishing touches to a converter for the PlayStation which will allow PAL machines to play Japanese and US games, and vice versa. As soon as it is complete we'll be testing it in our News section.

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NEXT MONTH

GOT ONE OF THESE?



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attached, and if yours says you are entitled to a Memory Card, send it to us and a free card will be winging its way to you. It's as simple as that, and is the kind of good deal you've come to expect from the leading PlayStation magazine.

Make sure you reserve your copy today, as copies are bound to fly off the shelves...

PlayStation Plus Issue 7 — on sale March 23rd

PlayStation Plus is selling out fast, so reserve a copy of the ultimate guide to the PlayStation by handing the following form to your local newsagent:

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ATTENTION! TRUE OR FALSE?

Please answer the following

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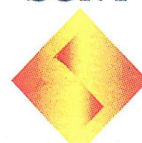
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